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BEYOND THE WORDS...IN SEARCH OF MEANING:
Strategies used by preschool L2 acquirers in
multilingual daycare settings.

Louise Linschoten

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

August 1994

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BEYOND THE WORDS...IN SEARCH OF MEANING:
Strategies Used by Preschool L2 Acquirers
in Multilingual Daycare Settings.

Louise Linschoten

The present study investigates second language (L2) sense-making strategies used by young language minority immigrant children in Canadian daycare settings. The research was conducted over a period of four months in two multicultural/multilingual daycare centres. The study involved six young minority language immigrant children from families who recently immigrated to Canada. Methodologies used for collecting the data included observations, field notes, running records, tape recordings and informal interviews. Data interpretations were based on categories borrowed from Tarone's (1980) typology of communication strategies and Wong Fillmore's (1979) cognitive and social strategies. The descriptive data indicated that young minority language immigrant children adhere to their own sense-making strategies. A common strategy was the use of observation. It was inferred that observations were used to size up the situation and people. This also allowed the children time to reflect. It appeared that these children depended largely on "scaffolding" procedures with the adult to acquire new L2 words. It was suggested that additional categories should be devised to supplement the existing

individual learning styles (Wong Fillmore, 1979) and Tyrone's typology (1980). It was further suggested that these sense-making styles include observations and reflection time.

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CHAPTER 1

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

With the continuation of worldwide migration, particularly to countries historically selected by immigrants, it is inevitable that an increasing variety of cultures and languages are being encountered in the country of choice (Fishman, 1989). Immigrants set out on a path of discovery: a new country, often a new language, and a new culture. Their children are integrated into a linguistically and culturally unfamiliar world.

The number of different languages globally has been estimated to be between 4,000 and 5,000, depending on how a language is defined (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988). Even if only a small percentage of these language groups immigrate to one particular country, the resulting linguistic and cultural diversity is staggering. Furthermore, Trueba (1991) states that "with the rapid demographic changes in the Western world, the importance of understanding the needs of minorities is becoming the most crucial issue in contemporary educational research" (p. 137). Some of the burning issues in pluralistic societies have been and will continue to be the maintenance of the first language and culture, and the place of the first and second language in instruction (Churchill, 1986).

My interest in languages goes back to my childhood which was spent in Holland where I was born and raised. My mother tongue, Dutch, is not a commonly used language throughout the world. As a result, the Dutch school curriculum includes foreign language instruction starting in elementary schools. Learning a foreign language seemed as natural as learning one's own. Language skills thus obtained equally prepare students for library research and to study the research material and the literature in the original languages.

For a variety of reasons, educational systems around the world educate all children, including the minority language children, in the majority language (Churchill, 1986). Nevertheless, a natural assumption is that a large percentage of (recent) immigrant families are attempting to maintain their native languages at home as part of their cultural identity (Cummins, 1984). For example, in 1985, about 10% of the students in the Swedish compulsory schools had a home language other than Swedish (Tingbjörn, 1988). It appears reasonable to conclude that more often than not the decision to abandon the mother tongue at home in favor of the majority language is influenced by outside forces (Rodriguez, 1982).

However, there has been strong support in the research literature, if not in the political arena, for the maintenance of the first language at home as well as in the educational settings (Cummins, 1981; Churchill, 1986; Wong Fillmore, 1988). It has been argued that language and culture are inseparable (Fishman, 1989), and that maintaining

the first language provides the immigrant with a sense of security (Kalasniemi, 1988; Wong Fillmore, 1988).

In a paper presented to the Council of Chief State School Officers, Wong Fillmore (1988) argued that one of the assumptions inherent in the present early education programs for minority language children is that "these children cannot succeed in school or in later life unless they become more like mainstream children" (p.24). Invariably, these changes create cultural clashes between the children and their families. Wong Fillmore (1988) argued that children need to be securely anchored in their primary culture before embarking on a new one. Their own cultural identity provides the security they need to adjust to their new environment (p. 26). Furthermore, the loss of the mother tongue may be costly for the children, parents as well as the extended family (Wong Fillmore, 1991). Communication may become difficult, especially when the first language is the only language spoken at home. Nevertheless, while most research supports maintenance of the mother tongue at home (Dolson, 1985a; Heath, 1986; Wong Fillmore, 1988), the reality is that many young immigrant minority-language children are entering their new world equipped with their mother tongue but with perhaps little or no knowledge of the majority language. Even so, they will eventually be integrated into their new surroundings and will gradually acquire the new language. How is this possible? How do these children come to

understand their linguistically and culturally different surroundings? What factors might play an important role?

An appropriate environment to gain insight into how young minority language children deal with L2 input appears to be an environment where children are encouraged to explore and test their skills through play (Wong Fillmore, 1979; Weber, 1991). Since play is the most natural medium of expression for children, much can be learned if they are observed at play over a period of time (Wong Fillmore, 1979).

The present study investigates second language (L2) sense-making strategies by young immigrant minority language children in a Canadian day care setting. The research was conducted over a period of 4 months in two multi-cultural/multi-lingual day care centers, "Le Papillon Jaune" and "Au Petit Coin". To assure confidentiality, all names appearing in this study are fictitious.

Sense-making strategies have not been clearly defined in the literature (Weber & Tardif, 1990). It is likely that a variety of factors play a role, similar to the process of second language acquisition (Wong Fillmore, 1989; Weber & Tardif, 1990). Thus, children's sense-making strategies might be guided by cultural experiences, linguistic roots, attitudes, information processing abilities, and social and cognitive processes.

Before elaborating further on the design and purpose of the study, the pertinent research literature will be reviewed in order to refine and clarify the research questions that

underlay this project. Any study into second language acquisition inevitably uses a variety of terminology, much of it from linguistics and socio-linguistics. Most terms will be explained carefully as they are introduced. However, readers who are not familiar with these terms are invited to consult Appendix B.

CHAPTER 1 (cont'd)

PART 11: EXPLORING THE RESEARCH QUESTION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.

Much of the research on second language acquisition has concentrated on the mechanisms and processes responsible for second language learning (Wong Fillmore, 1989). However, a large variety of additional factors play an important role when learning another language. Some of the most prominent documented issues include: motivation (Genesee, Rogers & Holobow, 1983; Strong, 1984); attitudes (Lambert, 1967; Gardner & Lambert, 1969; Schumann, 1978d); cognition (Wong Fillmore, 1976; Lightbown, 1977); language roots (Shevoroshken, 1990); individual variations (Carroll, 1981), individual learning styles (Wong Fillmore, 1979) and the link between language and culture (Fishman, 1989) .

Very little research has been conducted looking at strategies used by young immigrant minority language children. Most studies have looked at linguistic output in L2 (Peters, 1977; Meisel & Pienemann, 1981), communicative competence (Swain, 1985), and teaching strategies (Lightbown & Spada, 1989). Little is known about how these children conduct their search for meaning once they are in their new learning environment.

A brief overview of relevant literature will connect the various issues leading up to this study which investigates an array of strategies which were used by several culturally and linguistically diverse children in the L2 environment of a day care setting.

SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION.

Krashen (1983) makes a distinction between (a) acquiring a second language and (b) learning a second language. In his acquisition-learning hypothesis, he argues that for children "the acquisition" of a second language is similar to the acquisition of their first language. At first, Krashen explains, students will "pick up" the second language subconsciously and have implicit knowledge of that language. The acquirer is not consciously aware of the rules, but develops a feeling of correctness. It is an informal, and natural, learning process. For example this "picking up" could happen on the playground. According to his hypothesis, this is a first but necessary step for obtaining knowledge about the language, and therefore formal teaching will be of little help. In contrast, "learning" a second language occurs when the learner makes a conscious effort to obtain formal knowledge or explicit learning; the learner wants to know the rules. In this situation formal teaching becomes necessary. McLaughlin (1984) disputes these distinctions pointing out that it is equally possible to "learn" informally. He states that "reliance on the

situational context is not satisfactory because one can "acquire" language in the classroom setting focused largely on formal rules, just as one can "learn" rules in informal situations from native informants (p. 11). Indeed, both situations can be observed by watching children at recess and by listening to informal conversations in which L1 and L2 speakers participate. What Krashen was referring to when talking about "learning" was the formal classroom teaching with error correction, rule learning and grammar drills. Formal instruction did not occur in the day care settings where the research for this project took place. Following Krashen's acquisition-learning distinction, what was observed was the informal "picking up" of new words from peers or the child care workers. Therefore, it is mostly the acquisition and the strategies used by the L2 learners that will be addressed.

LANGUAGE ROOTS.

In an attempt to gain insight into the vast amount of languages used worldwide, linguists have tried to reconstruct the ancestry of the living languages by establishing language groupings. For example, Danish, Dutch, English, German, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish belong to the same group, or a proto-language (Teutonic) spoken some 3000 years ago (Shevoroshken, 1990). Shevoroshken maintains that sharing the same family language tree would make moving within these languages easier. For example the Dutch *melk*, becomes *milk*

in English and *milch* in German. Another striking example of common ancestry is French, Italian and Spanish which descend from Vulgar Latin and fall under the Romance languages. Here the French *café au lait*, changes to *caffé con latte* in Italian and to *café con leche* in Spanish. Second-language speakers will agree, for example, that "picking up" Italian and Spanish is easier for a person whose first language is French. On the other hand, it appears more troublesome, for example, for Westerners to "pick up" Asian languages, although Corder (1978a) argues that a second-language speaker's perception of the distances between the first and the second language appears to influence learning strategies and might affect progress. Bild and Swain (1989) concluded that a historical linguistic connection is insufficient grounds to expect excellent performance in a second or third language. They noted that in order to reach superior levels in the other languages, students must be supported by the literacy of their heritage language. These findings were supported by Swain and Lapkin (1991), who also found no evidence to support the linguistic/historical relationship in second and third language acquisition, but agreed that first language maintenance, if and when literary skills are taught, will enhance L2 acquisition. Earlier research has claimed that interference from the learner's first language was the major problem in acquiring a second language (Lado, 1964). It was only later on that the pendulum swung the other way, when several researchers proclaimed that L1 plays only a

minor role of interference in the L2 acquisition, especially for young children in a natural setting (Dulay & Burt, 1974). This view, however, has been highly disputed by researchers including Cummins (1978), Dolson (1985a), Heath (1986) and Wong Fillmore (1988).

INDIVIDUAL VARIATIONS.

Various researchers have expressed the notion that the level of success in acquiring a second or a third language is in part determined by the individual's phonetic coding ability. This ability might be enhanced by exposure to a variety of languages. Leopold (1949) argued that access to two or more languages at an early age could lead to a more rapid separation of sound and meaning. Carroll (1981) advanced the theory of "information processing" which includes the phonetic coding ability. He postulates that there are four specific systems involved when acquiring a second language, each one uniquely responsible for the level of success. Carroll's model includes the following four components:

- 1..Phonetic coding ability: an ability to identify distinct sounds, to form associations between those sounds and symbols representing them and to retain these associations.

2. Grammatical sensitivity: ability to recognize the grammatical functions of words (or other linguistic entities) in sentence structures.
3. Rote learning ability for foreign language materials: the ability to learn associations between sounds and meanings rapidly and efficiently, and to retain these associations.
4. Inductive language learning ability: the ability to infer or induce the rules governing a set of language materials, given samples of language materials that permit such inferences.

(Carroll, 1981, pp. 2-7).

In an experiment conducted in the early sixties, Peal and Lambert (1962) found that children who had access to two languages moved with ease between the two. The authors suggest that bilingual code-switching might facilitate the development of a more flexible mental set to approach cognitive tasks. "If the child is blocked when performing a verbal task, he can switch to his second language and start again" (p. 14). They argued that the positive consequences of having two languages include cognitive flexibility and meta-linguistic awareness. The well-known St. Lambert Experiment conducted by Lambert and Tucker in 1965 examined the possible effects of the home-school language switch on the progress in L2 as well as the standing in L1. The results indicated a marked difference in cognition and

attitude for the students in the experimental group. The researchers suggest that children in L2 programs use "incipient contrastive linguistics, a process of comparing and contrasting two linguistic codes, one learned from infancy and a new one that surrounds them in school" (p. 207). They further believe that the children not only developed their own translation system by comparing words and sounds to familiar and similar things in their L1, but also showed "linguistic detective capacities, that is, an attentive, patient, inductive concern with words, meanings and linguistic regularities". (p. 208). These findings are compatible with Carroll's (1981) model of information - processing theory.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING STYLES.

Wong Fillmore (1979) argues that second language learning is a an active process which requires a host of cognitive strategies and skills as well as social knowledge. She notes that attitudes towards the target language, willingness to take risks, motivation, and social and cognitive skills all play a part in this process. In a longitudinal study which included five subjects learning English as a second language, Wong Fillmore (1976) found that social and cognitive strategies were difficult to separate. She argued that when L2 learners decide to join a group and act as if they understand what is going on, they cognitively decide that they must guess and assume that the conversation

is relevant to the situation at hand. (Social strategy S-1, paired with cognitive strategy C-1).

Similarly, when L2 learners give the impression that they know the language by using a few well chosen and thus relevant expressions, they cognitively decide to take charge by using a few words they know best and/or search for a formula that works: 'I want to' or 'I don't want to'..(Social strategy S-2, paired with cognitive strategy C-2 and /or C-3). Wong Fillmore found that peer support for the L2 learners played a vital part in the acquisition of their second language. Their English speaking friends used gestures, simplified their verbal output and included the L2 learners in all their activities. (Social strategy S-3). Most of the L2 learners tried to use what they had already picked up even though it was not always correct English (Cognitive strategy C-4). By simply using the L2 and listening to their peers, they eventually modified their output (Cognitive strategy C-5).

Wong Fillmore concludes that individual learning styles are a result of a combination of factors which include social and cognitive abilities, personality, motivation, attitude, and risk taking. One of the major cognitive tasks for L2 learners is to be able to make sense out of an unintelligible language and how to figure out how the pieces fit together. She further states that a major social challenge for L2 learners is how to find a way to get along without the common

language and how to get your friends to want to help you in achieving your goal.

ATTITUDES.

Various studies have demonstrated that achievement in a second language is correlated with measures of attitudes toward the other community language and indices of motivation to learn the second language. Gardner and Lambert (1969) reported that a desire to identify with the language community, and success in learning the language, go hand in hand:

"that an integrative and friendly outlook toward the other group whose language is being learned can differentially sensitize the learner to the audio-lingual features of the language, making him more perceptive to forms of pronunciation and accent than is the case for a learner without this open and friendly disposition" (p.134).

This finding was confirmed by Wong Fillmore (1979) in her longitudinal studies with the L2 learners from Spanish background. She found that the most successful L2 learner had shown a strong motivation to be associated with the monolingual English speaking children.

Parental attitudes also play an important role and are often responsible for the children's attitude towards their

environment. Cummins (1981) found that minority language students who do poorly in school often have negative feelings towards their own culture and language, as well as towards the majority culture including the majority language. He argued that parents whose feelings are ambivalent towards their own heritage culture and language might encourage their children to speak the majority language at home. He suggested, however, that these parents may limit their children's language experience if their own L2 skills are not proficient. On the other hand, Cummins continued, minority language parents who are proud of their language and culture will promote the development and use of their own language, thereby enhancing their children's language experience, as well as instilling pride.

Immigrant children enter their new cultural environment with varying degrees of competence in their first language. Cummins (1978) believed that the development of the first language has a significant effect on the development of competence in the second language. Thus, in his view, if the first language (L1) is inadequately developed, the introduction and promotion of the second language (L2) can impede the continued development of L1. In turn, the inadequate development of L1 skills will limit the development of competence in L2. Indeed, Cummins (1978; 1979) found evidence in several studies that maintenance of the mother tongue in the homes of immigrant students did not interfere with the L2 acquisition. What seems to make a

difference is an ambivalent attitude of immigrant parents toward the majority culture and language. Gardner and Lambert (1969) argued that

"an individual acquiring a second language adopts certain behavior patterns, which are characteristic of another cultural group, and that his attitudes towards that group will, at least partly determine his/her success in learning the new language". (p.192).

Parents influence their children in the development of such attitudes. Miller (1983) reported that Kulvinder, a five-and-a-half year old girl whose first language was Punjabi, worried her teacher by not speaking much in school. She had also become very quiet at home. Apparently, Kulvinder's parents were so keen for their daughter to speak good English that they had given up speaking their native Punjabi, leaving Kulvinder confused about the language choice.

Wong (in press) argued that for language minority children, any program that emphasizes English as a second language at the expense of the mother tongue is a potential disaster. Miller (1983) pointed out that "outlawing" the use of the mother tongue at home by parents, as well as in the classroom by teachers, could have a devastating effect on children such as Kulvinder. In his autobiography, 'Hunger of Memory', Richard Rodriguez (1982) recalls several incidents

from his early school days as a young Spanish speaking immigrant:

"Several teachers came to the house. I overheard one voice gently wondering, 'Do your children speak only Spanish at home, Mrs. Rodriguez?' While another voice added, 'That Richard especially seems so timid and shy'. That Richard! With great tact the visitors continued, 'Is it possible for you and your husband to encourage your children to practice their English when they are at home?' Of course, my parents complied" (p. 21).

The "Americanization" of the children led to a quietness at home, as the English language use increased, the conversations over dinner, so cherished in their family life, were silenced. Rodriguez recalls,

"We remained a loving family, but one greatly changed. The family's quiet was partly due to the fact that, as we children learned more and more English, we shared fewer and fewer words with our parents. Sentences needed to be spoken slowly when a child addressed his mother or father. (Often the parents would not understand). The child would need to repeat himself. (Still, the parent misunderstood). The young voice, frustrated, would end up saying, 'never mind'. The subject was closed. My mother would smile softly, my

father would stare over the heads of his children (p. 23).

MOTHER TONGUE MAINTENANCE.

The search for identity by means of language was captured in an article written by Marianne Alopeus (1978), a Finnish immigrant living in Sweden. In her article "Thank you for my language", she wrote: "If we do not belong completely anywhere, at least we do in our mother tongue. That is where our identity is". The importance of maintaining one's mother tongue was emphasized by Kalasniemi (1988), a Finnish immigrant living in Sweden, who wrote: "Even if one does not return to one's own country, at least one knows one's culture and language. There is security in knowing where one belongs, and what one's roots are" (p. 179). Kaymak (1981) associates identity strongly with language, stating that "identity is developed within a certain culture, and this culture is inseparably related to the minority language" (as cited in Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988, p. 71).

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.

Fishman (1989) has done extensive research on issues pertaining to the intricate ties between language and culture. He believed that the debate about culture vis-à-vis language can be reduced to three major dimensions.

The first dimension, Fishman stated, is that "every language indexes its associated culture more fully than others do. The distinctive artifacts, conventions, concerns, values and beliefs of any culture are more fully, easily and naturally expressed by its associated language than by others" (p. 470).

The second dimension is that "at any given point in time, every language symbolizes its associated culture more fully than others do. The language represents its associated culture of its native speakers. It represents the culture's existence, its vibrancy and its intergenerational continuity to all who use and listen to it" (p. 470).

Fishman's third dimension stated that "every language enacts its associated culture more fully than others do. A language not only indexes and symbolizes its associated culture but it is part and parcel of that culture. Much culture is realized only through language. From law and religion to songs, tales, riddles and everyday greetings, every culture is not only language encumbered but language specific" (p. 471).

Miller (1983) encountered the relation between culture and language when conducting extensive interviews with immigrant children attending schools in the British school system. She found that certain concepts and beliefs were distinctly relevant to a given culture. Translation was either technically not feasible due to the absence of the equivalent tradition, or translation would alter the ideas as

portrayed in the conversations. She concluded that the general feeling among these students was that "keeping up your language was a good thing" (p. 102). These feelings were embedded in conversations between Miller and the children. Following are samples of Miller's interviews with six children from six different culturally and linguistically different backgrounds.

J.M: Are there subjects which you have never talked about in one of your languages?

A.P: I would find history difficult in Gujaratti, because of the dates and names.

D.L: No, we just say it was good or bad.

J.M: What about things to do with religion?

D.L: I have to talk in Chinese. There aren't English words for things because they're not known to English.

Samples of answers given by two Arabic speaking girls:

Fati: Like now, if I want to explain something to my parents and say - because my parents are very strict - if I say I want to go out somewhere and he said out where? I would not dare to say it in Arabic. Because if you say it in Arabic it sounds such a, sort of crime, something you're doing bad.

Naj:It sounds rude. If you explain something like love or something like this, which is all right in English but in Arab it sounds extremely awful...very rude

J.M:Is it something to do with the culture which is part of the language?

Fati:It is certainly the culture (p. 101).

Later on Fati described the situation at home on the weekend.

Fati:Sitting at home doing nothing with my hands folded like that I am saying it is the culture. Have you ever noticed? The way your hands behave in England. It's completely different from the way in Morocco (p. 29).

GESTURES and CULTURE.

When people speak, they commonly move their hands about at the same time. These movements are generally regarded as being closely integrated with speech. Gestures accompany the spoken word in practically every culture. In the literature on nonverbal behavior, several forms and ways of categorizing are used, the most widely accepted one being that developed by Knapp (1978). The first of his seven categories is that of the "body motion or kinetic behavior (p. 12). One of the movements in this category is usually referred to as "symbolic movements" (p. 12). These movements are made by

arms and hands and sometimes supported by a certain posture referring to a communicational content (Knapp, 1978). A further investigation by Poyatos (1983) suggests that "these arbitrarily coded gestures", or "emblems" as they were described earlier by Efron (1941), are cultural-specific (p. 98). Poyatos (1983) argued that their meaning is shared by members of a certain group. Results of an earlier study conducted by Birdwhistell (1970) also suggested that all movements are products of culture thus assigning an important role to culture in shaping nonverbal behavior of the individual. Birdwhistell (1970) further argued that movements do not primarily reflect inner states, but channel communication and serve group identity as well as cultural identity. Not sharing the same cultural background may lead to confusion or worse, misinterpretation by the receiver. Communication problems resulting from different meanings attached to certain gestures by members of different cultures have been demonstrated by Wolfgang (1979).

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES.

Tarone (1981) has conducted various studies in the area of communication strategies used by second language learners. In her view, communication strategies do not seem to be a part of the speaker's linguistic knowledge but are descriptive of the learner's pattern of use of what they know as they try to communicate with speakers of the target language. Furthermore, it is proposed that communication

strategies have an interactional function, as they are used for a joint negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer (p. 285). Tarone's (1978) typology of communication strategies includes three major categories with subdivisions in each category: 1) Paraphrase, subdivided into approximation, word coinage and circumlocution; 2) Transfer, subdivided into literal translation, language switch, appeal for assistance and mime; 3) Avoidance, including two subdivisions, topic avoidance and message abandonment.

(Appendix A provides the complete typology with explanations in each category). Tarone (1980) argues that 'Communication Strategies' are part of the larger category 'Strategies of Language Use' which also includes 'Production Strategy'. She further notes that 'Strategies of Language Use' are distinct from 'Language Learning Strategies'. In the latter category, the second language learner attempts to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language. The second language learner in the category 'Strategies of Language Use' attempts to communicate (a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on meaning) and/or tries to produce (an attempt to use one's linguistic system efficiently and clearly, with a minimum of effort) (p. 419).

Tarone (1981) found that second language learners employ a variety of strategies in order to express or decode meaning in the target language. She argued that the second language learners become quite skillful in maneuvering around the obstacles created by situations where the appropriate

systematic target language rules have not (yet) been formed.
(p. 287).

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION and INTERNAL DIALOGUE.

Partial answers to the language acquisition argument may be found within the different schools of thought. For Vygotsky (1962), social interaction is of primary importance specific to language acquisition. He argued that there is an inter-relationship between language, thought and social interaction. Vygotsky (1985) stated that language acquisition is mastered at first in collaboration with an adult or a more competent peer solely with the objective of communicating. Once mastered sufficiently in this way, it can then become internalized and serve "under conscious control as a means of carrying out inner speech dialogues" (p. 25).

Vygotsky (1985) saw social interaction as playing an essential role in the development of word meaning. In his view, it is through interaction with experienced members of the speech community that the child is exposed to linguistic norms. Vygotsky noted that one of the reasons for adults and children to participate in social interaction is to engage in communication and mutual regulation. In fact, social input is crucial in Vygotskian theory. Bruner (1985) stated that, according to Vygotsky, "there is a deep parallel in all forms of knowledge acquisition - precisely the existence of a crucial match between a support system in the social

environment and the acquisition process in the learner" (p. 28). This theory is demonstrated in Vygotsky's scaffolding process, in which the learner is supported by an adult or a more capable peer in order to move beyond his/her own present level of knowledge. A crucial notion in this process is the 'zone of proximal development'. Vygotsky (1978) defined this as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 11). Vygotsky (1985) also argued that inner speech is quasi-social. This is implicit in his use of terms such as inner dialogue. He argued that with inner speech humans preserve the function of social interaction.

"Children begin to converse with themselves exactly as they had earlier conversed with others" (as cited in Wertsch & Stone, 1985, p. 173). Vygotsky noted that the stages seen in children's progress are the result of "inner dialogue". Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development rests heavily on the key concept of internalization (Brown & Ferris, 1985).

Vygotsky further argued that all higher psychological processes are originally social processes, shared between people, particularly between children and adults. The child first experiences active problem-solving activities in the presence of others but gradually comes to perform these functions independently. The process of internalization is gradual; first the adult or knowledgeable peer controls and

guides the child's activity, but gradually the adult and the child come to share the problem-solving functions, with the child taking initiative and the adult correcting and guiding when he/she falters. Finally, the adult "cedes control to the child and functions primarily as a supportive and sympathetic audience" (p. 282).

SUMMARY

It appears that learning a second language involves a multitude of factors all uniquely contributing to the outcome. The learners' attitudes assist in soliciting support from the target language community (Gardner & Lambert, 1969; Wong Fillmore, 1989); parental attitudes influence the learners' motivation as well as the level of achievement of the target language (Cummins, 1981; Miller 1983). It has been suggested that individual variations in the 'information and processing systems' are responsible for the level of success obtained in the second language (Carroll, 1981); that perceived differences between L1 and L2 by the learner influence learning strategies and as a consequence, the rate of progress (Corder, 1978a). The notion of 'Individual learning styles' as advanced by Wong Fillmore (1979) includes elements which have been supported by various researchers: cognitive ability (Lightbown, 1977); motivation (Genesee, Rogers & Holobow, 1983); and attitudes (Lambert, 1967; Gardner & Lambert, 1969; Cummins, 1978; Schumann, 1978d). Wong Fillmore (1979) argued that all

factors together play an important role. Fishman (1989) noted the strong ties between culture and language. Expressions, humor, songs, and feelings are examples of cultural elements embedded in the language. He argued that only the native speaker will fully comprehend the depth of the language use. It has been suggested that gestures used by the L1 speaker are cultural-specific (Potyatos, 1983). Maintenance of the mother tongue has been strongly supported by researchers such as Miller (1983) and Wong Fillmore (1988) as well as by minority language speaking immigrants (Alopeus, 1978; Rodriquez, 1982; Kalasniemi, 1988).

Krashen (1983) argued that the first step in second language acquisition occurs in a natural way, without formal instruction. Vygotsky (1962) stressed the importance of social interaction in the language acquisition process arguing that adults as well as the more capable peers play an essential role in the language development of the child. The importance of the social interaction process is embedded in Wong Fillmore's (1976) theory of 'social and cognitive strategies' used by language minority children integrated into an L2 environment. In addition, Tarone (1981) noted that before L2 learners develop appropriate systematic target language rules, they appear to develop a system of their own. Using various tactics, L2 learners maneuver around obstacles created by their limited knowledge of the target language. (refer to Appendix C for Tarone's typology).

PURPOSE AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY.

The questions:

1. How do young L2 acquirers come to understand their environment?
2. What strategies appear to be involved?

Various studies have been conducted on strategies used by L1 minority language immigrant children in L2 majority language school settings (Tarone, 1980; Wong Fillmore, 1982). However, few if any have been conducted in day care centers (Weber & Tardif, 1990). It would be helpful for teachers to know more about how minority language children vary in the strategies they use to make sense out of their L2 environment.

Researchers such as Tarone (1980), Wong Fillmore (1982) and Weber & Tardif (1990) have demonstrated the importance of sense-making strategies and have identified several strategies frequently used by L2 acquirers.

By describing sense-making strategies used by young immigrant minority language children, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the knowledge of how these children come to understand their L2 environment. The focus, in particular will be on those immigrant children who enter the Canadian day care settings and whose L1 culture and language is maintained at home.

The purpose of this enquiry is thus to describe and interpret sense-making strategies used by young L2 acquirers in day care centers.

The most suitable methodology was deemed to be ethnographic observations in naturalistic settings. This methodology was chosen for many reasons.

1. Naturalistic research is a descriptive term that implies that the researcher conducts observations in the "natural, ongoing environment where people live and work" (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 5).

2. Watson-Gegeo (1988) extended the notion that ethnography is holistic. That is, it provides descriptive and interpretive-explanatory accounts of people's behavior in a given setting. The ethnographer carries out detailed observations of that behavior and examines how behavior and interaction are socially organized (p. 577).

3. Watson-Gegeo (1988) noted that "ethnographic observations and interpretations are guided not determined by theory" (p. 579).

4. Mehan (1981) asserts that "ethnographers do not use quantified, fixed, category checklist observational schemes in their observations because such schemes cannot capture the complexity of classroom interaction and cannot address the relationship between verbal and nonverbal behavior and context" (p. 39).

Since, as already noted, the purpose of this study is to investigate both verbal and nonverbal aspects of children's

L2 sense-making strategies, Mehan's (1981) and Watson-Gegeo's (1988) advice would make ethnographic techniques the methods of choice.

Extensive ethnographic research in ESL (English as a second language) has been done by Wong Fillmore (1979; 1988) and Watson-Gegeo (1988). Conducting ethnographic observations of young children in a L2 kindergarten, Wong Fillmore (1979) demonstrated the importance of individual learning styles and social and cognitive strategies in L2 acquisition. Watson-Gegeo (1988) noted that the ethnographic perspective on language learning is one of language socialization. She observed that when learning a second language, L2 learners also learn social and cultural norms, and procedures for interpreting L2. Watson-Gegeo (1988) pointed out that the product of ethnography is a detailed description and analysis of the social setting and the interaction that occurs within it (p. 58).

Wong Fillmore (1979), Tarone (1980) and Watson-Gegeo (1988) have done important work on methods and strategies used by L2 acquirers. Moreover, they have demonstrated the suitability of ethnographic investigative techniques for uncovering these strategies. Poyatos (1983) has said that there are cultural perspectives in communication strategies. It is therefore important to observe the naturally occurring nonverbal aspects of children's L2 sense-making strategies.

Thus, because of the relevance of the work by Wong Fillmore (1979) and Tarone (1980), the research methods used

in this study which will be described later, are based largely on their methodology. A pilot study confirmed the suitability of observation-based field notes to capture classroom interactions relevant to the research questions.

CHAPTER 2

THE STUDY: Description and Methodology

The present study is an ethnographic investigation into the sense-making strategies of six young minority language immigrant children in their L2 daytime environment: five-year-old Nico who attends the day care center "Au Petit Coin", and four-year old Amanda, five-year-old Eric and his little brother Andy who is almost three years old, four and a half-year old Kim and her three-year-old brother Toh. The last five children are enrolled in the day care center "le Papillon Jaune".

The reasons these six children were selected to participate in the study was fourfold:

- 1) Multilingual and multicultural backgrounds (Hispanic, Eastern European and Asian).
- 2) L1 maintenance at home (their first language was maintained at home with the immediate and the extended family).
- 3) Immigrants (their families were recent immigrants to Canada).
- 4) Second language acquisition (none of the children had received any formal second language instruction).

The children were selected from two day care facilities. The initial contact with the Directors of the day care centers was followed by explanatory letters to the coordinators of the day care facilities. Similar letters and consent forms were sent to the parents. The parents were requested to return the signed consent forms directly to the researcher. (Samples of the correspondence and consent forms can be found in Appendix A). To assure confidentiality all names appearing in this project are fictitious.

Before introducing the children involved in this study in more detail, a description of the chosen day care centers attempts to familiarize the reader with the environment where the observations took place. A brief account of the methodologies used in this study strives to clarify in what manner the data was collected. Finally, the recorded stories of the children will illuminate their sense-making strategies even beyond the words in their L2 environment.

DAY CARE SETTINGS.

The study was conducted over a period of four months in two multicultural/multilingual day care settings, 'Au Petit Coin' and 'Le Papillon Jaune'. (refer to Appendix E for clarification of Day care center). This type of setting was deliberately chosen for a variety of reasons:

1. Very little research has been reported in the literature looking at L2 acquisition in minority language

children in the age range between approximately two-and-a-half and five-years.

2. Since the purpose of the study was to investigate children's sense-making strategies in an L2 environment, it was important to choose a setting in which L2 is acquired and not learned (Krashen, 1981).

3. Day care centers were judged to be the preferred environment as they tend to operate under more flexible schedules. Day care, a more recent addition in early childhood education, has probably been modified most by time arrangements and parent needs (Weber, 1984). These are settings where non parental care is offered to children ranging in age between three months and five years. Operating hours are usually between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. The children are under the supervision of child care workers. To obtain an operating licence, day care facilities must meet clearly defined standards as outlined by the Provincial Government (Gouvernement du Québec, l'Office des services de garde à l'enfance, 1992).

Although daily activities follow regular routines in these settings, in contrast with kindergarten or grade school, little or no formal (language) instruction takes place. Thus, the flexibility of scheduling and programming within the day care settings allows for a more natural environment. At the same time, this flexibility creates and enhances opportunities for the children to explore and test their skills on their own.

4. The demand for day care facilities is rapidly increasing. Figures from Statistics Canada (1993) reveal an increase in working mothers with children under the age of six from 60.8% in 1986 to 66.3% in 1993. Invariably, these figures include minority language families. This renders day care settings the ideal environment to gain insight into sense-making strategies used by minority language children in an L2 environment.

The reason for selecting these two specific day care settings where the data collecting took place were:

- The individual groups included children from immigrant families who maintain their first language at home;
- The children were in the same age group;
- The day care staff members were very interested in the project and were willing to welcome the researcher into their classrooms;
- The day care staff members were willing to cooperate and to participate in informal interviews;
- Several members of the day care staff were multilingual covering some of the (first) languages spoken by the children;
- Both English and French were used simultaneously by the staff members during the day;
- The groups included both English and French speaking children as well as minority language immigrant children.

This meant that the immigrant children were exposed to both languages, through play with their English and French speaking peers as well as through the interactions with the staff members.

The fact that several staff members were multilingual was judged to be important to the research project. This allowed the researcher to include additional information on sense making strategies when L2 acquirers have access to adults who speak (their own) L1.

AU PETIT COIN.

This center was the smaller one of the two involved in the study and is registered under the category 'home day care'. Home day cares are operated out of a private home and fall under the same government regulations as the more formal day care centers which are usually located in commercial buildings. 'Au Petit Coin' is situated in the lower part of a large duplex. There is a large play area which is used when weather prevents the children from using the outdoor play yard.

The outdoor play yard includes an innovative garden. The children actively participate in the creation of the flower and vegetable patches in early spring. Later on, the observation of the growing process of the seeds and bulbs planted, becomes part of the learning process.

The rooms are well equipped with educational toys and other material including books, arts and craft material,

puzzles, fine motor skills material. The walls are covered with colorful finished art projects. There is one large room equipped with (children's size) tables and chairs where most of the daily indoor activities take place. The smaller room is used for story telling, reading, circle time and nap-time.

Daily operating hours are between 8 a.m. and 5.30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The center is closed on holidays. Although the center accommodates for the parents' needs as much as possible, the director encourages the parents to adhere to regular time schedules. To observe rules, she argued, is part of the learning process and will help the children to adjust when they enter elementary school.

The daily routine starts with circle time where the children usually exchange their experiences from the previous day or the weekend. The educator functions as an animator and the conversations can become quite lively. This is followed by story time which is usually flavored with an educational component. For example, the occurrence of the solar eclipse was explained in detail days before it happened. The wonders of the era of the dinosaurs were covered over a period of several days and was a prelude to an outing to the museum where they could look at "the real thing!" Later in the morning, the children move to the bigger room. Each child chooses his/her own activity. For example, this could be coloring, a puzzle, pre-writing skill practice. Before lunch, the children go outside in the yard for exercise followed by free play. Lunch time is at 12,

followed by nap time between 1 p.m. and 2.15 p.m. Activities in the afternoon vary. One of the big projects was the preparation for the 'Big Event'. The 'Big Event', the director explained is the graduation of two of the children in the spring. They will enter 'the Big School' (elementary school) in September. Some of the afternoons were filled with making props for the show planned for graduation day and learning songs. Other afternoons were used for outdoor activities including outings and walks to the park.

There were nine children enrolled in 'Au petit coin'. The reader will meet one of the children, Nico, a participant in this study.

LE PAPILLON JAUNE.

The larger of the two day care centers included in this project is located in a commercial building. The premises are bright and spacious and includes four large classroom. The visitor is met by the buzzing sounds of sixty children ranging in age between 3 months and five years. The bilingual services are offered between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.

The children are assigned to four different groups mainly on the basis of age although there appears to be some flexibility in the assignments. Adjustments will be made when the child's level of functioning warrants a placement in a different group.

The classrooms are well equipped with age appropriate toys and materials suitable for a variety of activities

including arts and craft, puzzles, building blocks, a doll house, a tool bench. The walls are covered with paintings, pictures and dazzling looking creatures, all end products of the children's' activities.

One of the interesting features in the two classrooms for the older age groups is the floor cover, a large round carpet with educational designs, the alphabet and pictures with matching designs for example: Aa and an apple are in the same square.

The carpet is the center of activities. During story telling time, the children sit in a circle on the carpet. The staff member will ask questions about a particular design, or will ask which letter the child is close to and encourages him/her to talk about it. The carpet area is used for most of the organized activities including sing-songs, games and puzzles.

A usual day starts at 7 a.m. when the children start to arrive. Most come early and have breakfast at the center. The activities begin around 9.30 a.m. with a story. The children are encouraged to participate and to suggest ideas. The next activity is usually a sing-song with 'action', for example a song which requires body movement. This is followed by activities around the table for example making cookies, coloring, preparing a project. If the weather is nice, a walk to the nearby park might replace the indoor activities. Lunch is at 11.45 a.m. followed by nap-time. The afternoon activities vary: they usually include some

physical activities, playing in the outdoor play area or sometimes an outing.

The children leave between 4.30 p.m. and 6 p.m. depending on the parents' schedule.

Five of the children participated in this study.

THE STORY TELLERS.

The six children who participated in the project come from immigrant families where the first language and culture is maintained at home. All had been in the day care centers for less than a year. An interesting factor was the diversity in cultures represented among the six children: Hispanic, Eastern European and Asian. In addition, there were two sets of siblings, two brothers from Romania and a brother and sister from Vietnam.

Let's introduce the participants who are the focus of this project. Their names are Amanda, Andy, Eric, Kim, Toh, and Nico.

AMANDA.

Amanda is four years old and attends the day care center 'Le Papillon Jaune'. She is an only child and has been at the day care for less than six months. Brought by her grandfather, Amanda attends the day care daily. She appears to be happy at the center but is always excited to see her family at the end of the day. Her first language, Spanish,

is maintained at home as well as with the extended family and friends.

ANDY.

Andy is two years and ten months old and attends 'Le Papillon Jaune' together with his brother Eric, whom we'll meet next. Andy's family arrived from Romania and are determined to maintain their first language and culture at home. The parents deliberately chose 'Le Papillon Jaune' for its bilingual program. Both children attend the center daily and appear to be content but, like Amanda, get excited when the parents arrive at the end of the day.

ERIC.

Eric, Andy's older brother, is five years old. There are two siblings in the family. The boys are not in the same group but they did (attempt) to visit each other's class during the day.

KIM.

Kim is a four-and-a-half year old girl from Vietnam. Kim and her younger brother, three-year-old Toh are enrolled at 'Le Papillon Jaune'. The first language, Vietnamese, is the only language spoken at home. Both brother and sister are in the same group and it appeared that they have no knowledge of English or French.

TOH.

Toh is the three-year-old brother of Kim. Both brother and sister are brought to the day care by the mother. Kim and Toh are both in the older group. The staff felt that Toh appeared to function better when he is together with his sister. The children seem content during the day, and like the others, become excited when the mother enters the room at the end of the day.

Both siblings attend the day care part time, three days per week.

NICO.

Nico is a five-year-old only child from immigrant parents. Nico's first language, Bulgarian, is only partly maintained at home. The father uses Bulgarian but the mother uses intermittently English and Bulgarian. Nico attends the home day care 'Au Petit Coin' on a daily basis.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTING.

As already mentioned, methods used for data collecting included observations, field notes, running records, tape recordings and informal interviews with the care takers. A detailed description of procedures follows.

OBSERVATIONS.

Wong Fillmore (1979) noted that "observational data can provide better insight into what children are like" (p. 221). She argued that observations over a period of time will reveal more about the naturalistic behavior of children than any formal testing.

Observations conducted for the present study took place during a four-month period. These observations took place not only in the classrooms of the two day care centers but also in the park where the children played on various occasions. This gave me the opportunity to gather additional information on L1 maintenance due to a chance meeting with several neighborhood L1 grandmothers which will be addressed later. Initially, for a variety of reasons, several global observations were made.

They served several purposes:

- 1) it gave the children the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the researcher, and

2) it gave the researcher a chance to get a feeling for the environment, the daily routine and to choose an appropriate vehicle to record the observations.

As many ethnographers have noted (e.g., Spradly, 1976) gaining access to the natural environment and establishing rapport are essential prerequisites to conducting a valid study. Recording detailed field notes was the primary technique used to record observations on the environment and social interactions. On occasion, an audio tape recorder was used to record a dialogue. However, this method of recording was not always effective. The children were fascinated by the machine and distracted their attention. The tape recorder tended to become a play object. The researcher's knowledge of shorthand compensated for the limited amount of audio recording enabling her to accurately record dialogue.

I will now describe the way the observation schedules were organized, followed by examples of a typical observation day and a description of the role of the observer.

OBSERVATION SCHEDULES.

As the division of the participants in this study was unevenly divided into two locations, observation schedules were adjusted accordingly. 'Le Papillon Jaune', where five of the children were participating in the study, was visited three times per week (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday). Total amount of hours per week was approximately twenty. A

typical observation day started between 9.30 a.m. and 10 a.m. and ended at approximately 6 p.m. Mornings were spent in the classroom with the younger age group. Afternoons were reserved for the older age group. The time periods were chosen at the suggestion of the staff members. They argued that the younger children functioned better in the mornings and that 'nap times', although scheduled, were not always predictable.

'Au Petit Coin', the home day care where one child participated in the study, was visited on Mondays. A typical observation day started at 9 a.m. and ended approximately at 2 p.m., a total of 5 hours per week. Two extra days were added to the schedule due to special theme days: one was an outing to the museum, and the second was 'graduation day'.

EXAMPLES OF A TYPICAL OBSERVATION DAY.

A. A day at the home day care center 'Au Petit Coin'.

By the time I arrived at 9.a.m. the children were already settled down and had started their daily routine. Usually, on Mondays, this meant a lively exchange of experiences of the weekend activities at home. The educator asked general questions and the children took turns to tell their story. Typically, the educator started by asking "What did you do over the weekend" and "Who wants to tell us first, raise your hand". Besides the usual cheers upon my arrival, my presence did not appear to interrupt the routine.

I started my observations by sitting on the floor in a corner where I could see the children's' faces as well as the educator. This gave me a good view to observe the interactions as well as hearing the stories. My starting point in each observation was invariably the recording of the place, time, the general atmosphere, which child was talking, the trend of the conversation. I then gradually focused on Nico and his reactions, interactions with the children and the educator, his way of initiating a dialogue, facial expressions, nonverbal communications for example, looking at the educator or other children, raising his hand, making notes in what context the strategies occurred.

After each activity and after the children had moved to another room, I took approximately twenty minutes to compliment my notes with additional information and to check my original observations.

In the activity room: the children sat around the table with their books or other favorite activity. My place was usually away from the table, unless I was asked by the educator to join the group. Nico sat either opposite me which made it easier to observe him in the context of his environment for example interaction with peers, his nonverbal observable strategies for example a look or shaking his head. At times I sat beside him. Typically, I would try to start a conversation with him.

The next activity moved to the yard where the educator encouraged the children to participate in exercises. This

activity was followed by free play for example the children played with beach balls, rode a tricycle, played in the sandbox, helped with the preparations of the flower and vegetable garden. During these activities I sat on the steps outside recording my observations.

After the children had gone for a nap, I sat down in a corner adding more details to my notes when necessary. This occurred when I did not have enough time to write, or did not want to distract the children by writing. On occasion, I used the tape recorder, mostly during lunch times. I showed it to the children and then put it aside near a plant. After a few minutes the children would forget it was there. These recordings were helpful only when the children were actively engaged in a conversation. Sometimes only an occasional word was recorded. I used the recorder sparingly and only when this approach did not interfere with the existing routine.

B. A day at the day care center 'Le Papillon Jaune'.

I arrived at the center between 9 a.m. and 9.30 a.m and left at 6 p.m. I tried to divide my time equally between the children who participated in the study. However, to capture the total environment and activities they were engaged in, I preferred to extend the observations over three consecutive days per week.

Amanda and Andy's group.

My day started out in the younger group. Typically, the children were finishing breakfast, cleaning up, brushing teeth and washing hands. This appeared to be a good time to enter the classroom as the activities had not yet begun. After the cheering and greetings from the children, I sat in a corner with my notebook and waited.

The days began with a story. The children sat around, listened, and participated. I usually sat on the floor, close to the circle formed by the children, I observed and made notes. Often the children came and sat next to me while I was writing.

The next activity was an active one. One of the children usually took me by the hand and urged me to join. During this activity it was not possible to do any note taking. The songs were followed by activities around the table. During this time, I sat in a corner recording in shorthand what had occurred previously. After this, I went back to the table to observe. I followed the same routine during lunch time.

The children's nap time provided me with enough free time to retreat to a quiet corner and complement my notes.

Eric, Kim and Toh's group.

I usually entered the classroom around 2 p.m. The children woke up at that time, some never slept.

In this group I started my observations sitting in a corner. Kim was the first to wake up, followed by Toh. This gave me a head start to observe the two together. Eric was always the last to get up. Snack time was at 2.45 p.m.

Again, my observation corner gave me the opportunity to oversee the whole group. I took notes covering the total environment in which the sense-making strategies occurred. Kim usually watched me writing. She sometimes took my pen and scribbled something on my paper, then smiled. Or she wanted the whole notepad to use for drawing.

Activities after snack time varied. Sometimes they centered around the table. I sat in a corner taking notes. The tape recorder appeared to be of little use in this group. It became an object of curiosity and distracted the attention of the children. I have used it on occasion when Eric joined me spontaneously.

TRANSCRIBING THE NOTES.

The transcribing of the field notes was done in the following manner. The field notes accumulated during each observation day were entered into the computer that same day. This routine helped to recapture the impressions of the day. Margins were left on the recording pages for thematic analysis to uncover developing patterns.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that data analysis in ethnography is ongoing. It starts to take shape in the

field notes but it is informally embodied in the ethnographer's ideas, hunches, and emerging concepts. (p. 175).

Finally, the writing and continuous analysis of the field notes became a path of discovery. Ely (1991) argued that "formulations begin to take shape, at least in the researcher's mind, or as framework for analysis, long before making the 'final story' (p. 173).

THE ROLE OF THE OBSERVER.

The role of the observer in qualitative research has been described by Wolcott (1988). During the observations my role as observer varied between the active participant-researcher and the privileged observer (Wolcott, 1988).

1. The active participant researcher.

On occasion, depending on the activity, the children 'demanded' my participation. For example, a request to read a story, a group activity, lending a helping hand. When I first entered the classrooms I tried not to intrude and remained at a distance. However, only a short while later it became evident that young children involve all, including researchers, in their activities. The position of participant thus provided me with ample opportunities to engage in dialogues with the children and ask questions. My occasional active participation created a position of trust

with the children. At first, I was the object of curiosity, a newcomer in the group. But after the initial excitement subsided, the children continued with their usual routines. The researcher equipped with a notebook and pen became a trusted fixture in the group.

2. The privileged observer.

My role as a privileged observer was marked by my presence in the classrooms and observing the participants without direct involvement in their activities. They came to asked me for help to tie a shoelace, or pull up a zipper but basically, I observed and took notes.

INFORMAL INTERVIEWS.

The informal interviews with staff members evolved naturally. Questions presented themselves while observing the children and during breaks. For example, one staff member spontaneously shared her multi-linguistic background with me which prompted me to ask the following questions: "How did you feel about all these languages? You moved to three different countries when you were growing up, how did you manage to understand your new friends?" She answered: "Well, you did not have a choice. It was tough at first, but then you learned. Now I am happy 'cause I speak 4 languages fluently".

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) articulated the art of interviewing in ethnography by suggesting that "ethnographers do not restrict themselves to a single mode of questioning" (p. 113). They extended the view that the non-directive interviewing approach appears to be passive. However, it is evident that the interviewer must be an active listener in order to assess how the information relates to the research focus (p. 113).

Opportunities to ask questions were seized when they seem relevant: in the park, in the hallway at the centers, during spontaneous conversations with staff members. For example: I noticed that one of the staff members appeared to have an Italian accent. During one of our conversations I asked her where she was born. She replied: "Right here, in Montreal, but we spoke Italian at home with my parents and other relatives. Actually, I only started to speak English when I went to grade school". When I asked how she felt about that, she continued: "Well, its o.k. I guess, did not bother me. Had some problems with spelling, but after awhile, I got used to it, English, I mean". These statements underline Wong Fillmore's (1979) beliefs in maintaining L1 at home. However, they were not included in the interpretations of the data as they reached beyond the scope of this study.

INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA.

In order to access the multi-faceted findings of the study, classifications of sense-making strategies and processes were examined from earlier reported research and used where appropriate. Three particular classifications proved useful in analyzing the data.

They are.

1. Mime and Topic avoidance taken from Tarone's (1981)
"A typology of communication strategies. (refer to Appendix C for a complete version of the typology).
2. Categories from Wong Fillmore's (1979)
"Cognitive and social strategies". (refer to Appendix D for a detailed description)
3. Vykotsky's (1985) notion of "Inner Dialogue".

DESCRIPTION OF INDIVIDUAL CATEGORIES.

1. Mime (Tarone, 1981) is described as "the learner uses nonverbal strategies in place of meaning structure". Sense-making strategies were recorded as "mime" when the following non-verbal strategies were observed:
 - (a) facial expressions
 - (b) pointing
 - (c) shaking head (affirmative or negative)
 - (d) mimicking using fingers, hands, arms and the whole body

(e) clapping hands

2. Topic avoidance (Tarone, 1981) occurs "when the learner simply does not talk about concepts for which the vocabulary or other meaning structure is not known". "Topic avoidance" was recorded when the following strategies were observed:

- (a) changing the topic of the conversation
- (b) avoiding answering a question by introducing a new topic
- (c) running away from the conversation or question

RECORDING OF COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL STRATEGIES. (Wong Fillmore, 1976).

1. Social Strategies:

S-1: join a group and act as if you understand what's going on, even if you don't

- (a) quickly sizing up the situation, then following the routine
- (b) joining and taking charge

S-2: give the impression, with a few well chosen words, that you can speak the language

- (a) starting a conversation
- (b) talking about something you know well

S-3: count on your friend

- (a) sitting next to a friend
- (b) looking at your friend for help

2. Cognitive strategies:

C-1: assume that what people are saying is directly relevant to the situation at hand, or to what they or you are experiencing. Metastrategy: Guess!

- (a) using a neutral expression (e.g. o.k., aha)
- (b) fitting in

C-2: Get some expressions you understand, and start talking

- (a) using an opener for example 'I show you, look'

C-3: Look for recurring parts in the formulas you know

- (a) using same sentence in positive and negative (e.g. I want to play with this, I don't want to play with that)

C-4: Make the most of what you've got

- (a) trying till you succeed

C-5: Work on the big things first; save the details for later

- (a) using the words you know and asking for help to find the missing ones

CHAPTER 3

THE STORIES: reports on the strategies used by the children.

What follows are detailed descriptions based on rigorous analysis and triangulations of the data. Quotes are verbatim from the field notes and transcripts of classroom interactions, tape recordings and interviews.

Amanda.

Amanda is an energetic four-year-old Hispanic girl with an outgoing personality. She shows initiative, likes to explore and is not easily discouraged. One of the staff members remembered Amanda's first days at the center very well. "She did not understand a word of English or French", the educator recalled. "She spoke only Spanish, not one word of anything else. But from the start, she was very attentive to what was going on and got involved with the other children right away". When the staff member was asked if she recalled how the child managed to make sense out of her new environment without the knowledge of either French or English, she added: "Oh well, by just waving her hands, gesturing and just speaking Spanish, and the other children understood, somehow".

Amanda's involvement and awareness of what is going on became apparent on one of the first days in the beginning of

the project. The staff had planned an outing to the nearby park which is within walking distance from the center. This excursion required several steps to prepare the children: putting on the jackets, lining up the children two in a row, and finally, every child is attached to the walking rope by means of a velcro strip tied around the wrist. The 'walking rope' is used for safety and accommodates twelve children. Finally, the staff member told the children about the plans and allowed 15 minutes to get ready. Amanda, eager to help, jumped up, exited and ran to the staff while she called out: "Me, me, um, um, Mia, me, me.". The staff engaged her in the following dialogue:

M: I don't understand, Amanda, what would you like?

A: um, me, that (pointing to the rope)

M: you want the rope?

A: ye, rope, go out now

M: you want the rope to go out?

A: ye, no, all go out, now, hurry

M: I see, you want to help so that we can out
quickly, right?

A: ye, coats on, hurry, hurry (calling out to the other
children).

She proceeded to bring in the jackets, helping the children to get dressed and then lead them to the door where they had to line up.

A: you here (taking a child by the hand and pointing where she should go). She continued to direct the others while being encouraged by staff members.

M: thank you, Amanda, you were helpful. Now we can go out.

A: you welcome, Mia (She looked proud).

On the way to the park Amanda announced that she wanted to hear a song.

A: Mia, sing a song, please?

M: o.k. Who wants to sing a song?

A: (the first to put in the request). me, me. I want 'frère Jacques'!

M: o.k. Let's sing 'frère Jacques'.

Amanda sang the song without help and without hesitation. She apparently knew all the words as well as the melody.

The park is a small neighborhood children's' play area with the usual equipment including slides, a sandbox, swings and rocking horses. Observing children in such a natural environment has additional value. Children wander around freely and create their own circle of friends. This particular park is a popular play ground for the neighborhood children who appeared to be mostly from Greek and Italian immigrant families. Although there was no common language among the neighborhood children and the children from the day care center (except "childese language"), they often played together. Observing these children ignoring the language barrier underlines the findings of Tarone (1981) and Weber &

Tardif (1990). Using their different L1, Greek, Italian and Spanish, each child combined the verbal output with gestures, pointing, and facial expressions which Tarone (1981) categorized as 'mime'. Weber & Tardif (1990) state that "they often act as if they have every confidence that communication is possible between people speaking different languages, as if the will to communicate or to understand is a necessary and sometimes even sufficient condition for a successful social experience of communication" (p. 8).

While observing the children in the park, I seized the opportunity to learn more about the approach of these neighborhood L1 families in regard to L1 language and culture and engaged in several conversations with the three different care takers, two Greek and one Italian grandmother. Trying to find a way to bridge the language gap between these grandmothers and myself finally became an innovative mixture of gestures combined with a few words in Italian and a few in French sustained by a willingness to communicate. The following picture emerged from these conversations and observations. For these particular families, at least, maintaining the first language and culture at home was mandatory. As one grandmother put it "good for them, good base for them". The grandchildren of the Greek grandmothers were enrolled in a Greek day care center and will eventually join their siblings in Greek elementary schools. When asked about the need for the children to speak French and English the response was unanimous: "ah, later, they learn later, not

now, no good now". These viewpoints, giving the children a good base by maintaining L1 as well as learning L2 later, are supported in the literature (Cummins, 1978, 1979; Kaymak, 1981; Fishman, 1989; Wong Fillmore, in press).

Amanda showed her outgoing personality on various occasions in the park. Not in the least held back by the lack of a common language, she would stroll up to the Greek speaking neighborhood children and observe the situation for a while before getting involved. It seemed as if she was trying to make sense out of their conversation. Peal and Lambert (1962) observed similar techniques used by L2 learners in French immersion classes. They extended the notion of "linguistic detective capacities" (p. 208), compatible with Carroll's (1981) information-processing theory.

On one occasion on a sunny day in the park, Amanda took the two Greek children by the hand and pointed to the sun, then to the ground, set down to enjoy the sun and gestured to her newly found Greek friends to do the same. The children joined her, sat next to her and smiled, Amanda responded with the English "Thank You" and smiled back. Wong Fillmore (1979) argued that well developed social strategies or "some very special social skills" are crucial for an L1 speaker in a L2 environment (p. 220).

Amanda's initiative and motivation to get involved were constantly apparent. During the free play sessions in the classroom the children choose their own favorite activity and

friends to play with. Amanda usually went to the cupboard to collect puzzles or a game before settling down somewhere on the carpet. Other children would then join her on their own. During one such session the following scenario was observed. Amanda had collected several stuffed animals and a large puzzle. Two other children watched her and seemed to have decided to join her. One child was L1 English speaking and the other one was L1 French speaking. Amanda looked with an inquisitive expression on her face, perhaps waiting for a question. She appeared to have reasoned that they wanted to join her and made room for her friends by rearranging the stuffed animals in a corner near the puzzle, and signaled to the other two children to sit down. (Amanda waved her hands, pointed to the other two children, then to the floor. "Ici", she said, tapping on the spot she wanted them to sit down). The two friends then settled on the floor. After some giggling and staring at each other, Amanda looked at the animals, picked up a bunny and showed him to the other children. The conversation went as follows:

A: regarde, le bunny (meanwhile pretending she was feeding him). The L1 English speaking girl replied:

L: ye, he is eating!

(the L1 French girl nodded her head in agreement)

A: elle est grande ('Grande' is pronounced with a rolling R resembling the Spanish pronunciation. Amanda pronounced both English and French without an accent. Only, when a word closely resembled the Spanish equivalent, she

pronounced it with a Spanish accent. Carroll (1981) refers to this phenomena as phonetic coding ability).

Amanda's observations are remarkable. Little escapes her attention. During a free play session, Amanda and her friends were playing together. Meanwhile, another girl had joined the group holding a stuffed animal. (Apparently, to fill some time while waiting for her mother). Amanda looked at the girl, then noticed the mother who had just entered the classroom. After a few minutes had passed, the girl tried to leave the room with the toy. This maneuver did not escape Amanda's attention. She ran up to the staff, yelling: "Mia, Mia, c'est (pointing to the toy) belong to the garderie". (Garderie was pronounced as a French word). Amanda looked disturbed, then smiled. She had noticed the rescue efforts by the staff to retrieve the toy.

During the months that Amanda attended the day care she managed to pick up both English and French. This became apparent during a music session. One of the favorite activities in the day care is music time. Sometimes there are musical instruments to choose from but mostly it is the songs themselves the children prefer and like to sing. The children take turns choosing their favorites. On one particular occasion, the children sat down and before anyone had a chance to ask for a song, Amanda put her hand up and said: "Mia, Mia, he Mia, je veux chanter, oui, oui, le song avec les papillons, please, oh Mia, please". The staff member agreed and Amanda proceeded to sing the complete song

in French, without hesitation. After she finished, she was complimented by the staff members and was told to wait her turn for the next song. When her turn came, the staff addressed Amanda in English.

M: Amanda, which song would you like to sing?

A: oh, I know, "I love you, you love me", o.k.?

M: That is a nice song, o.k., go ahead.

Amanda sang the complete song in English. It appears that for Amanda the choice of the language used is directed by the language preference of the other person. For example, when Amanda addresses one of her French speaking peers, she uses French. The same approach is used for the English speaking peers. Similarly, when a staff member addresses her in English, she replies in English. The same holds true for French.

Only occasionally, for example, when a new subject is introduced, will Amanda seek help from the Spanish speaking staff member. The following vignette intends to illustrate this.

During an Arts and Craft session, the children were making spiders from egg cartons and pipe cleaners. This activity also required the use of glue and paint. Amanda, who was concentrating on cutting and coloring, suddenly looked up and addressed the Spanish speaking staff: "Mia, cola, por favor" (Mia, the glue, please). When Amanda was finished with the project, she showed Mia the spider. "He, Mia, Mia, araña, araña ". She then ran off to the non-

Spanish speaking staff member and asked to sing the spider song.

A: Jane, Jane, the song with the ..uhm..uhm...araño (mimicking the crawling movements of a spider with her fingers).

Jane replied: "You want to sing the spider song?"

A: Yes, ye, the spider song, please, now, please.

The "itsy, bitsy, spider" song was introduced only a few days earlier when the educator talked about the summer and several different insects. One of the stories she talked about was about "the spiders and the web". To illustrate this, the staff taught the children the 'spider song' including the gestures resembling a spider crawling against the window. Amanda remembered the melody and also a few lines which she sang with some help from the adult. When she missed a word, she used the gestures and asked the adult for the word. She held her fingers in the air and asked "this, I forgot this word". "Crawling", the educator answered. Amanda then repeated the sentence from the beginning: "Itsy, bitsy, spider, crawling on the wall". In this instance, during her search for knowledge, Amanda received assistance from an adult. The success of this 'scaffolding process' is based on a crucial match between the learner and the available support system (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1985).

Occasionally Amanda will use Spanish spontaneously, sometimes it seems just to tease the non-Spanish speaking staff, at others times during mealtimes, it appeared that she

did this unconsciously. This happened during lunch time. Amanda held up her glass and asked for milk in Spanish: "leche, por favor,". She stopped for a moment, looked at her glass and proceeded to correct herself and added: "um, oh ..milk, please". I asked her why she spoke in Spanish but she did not seem to be aware of it. I can only infer that meal times remind her of home which results in a spontaneous switch to her L1. How did Amanda manage in her L2 environment?

Amanda's Strategies:

It appeared that Amanda enjoyed to be with her peers and the adults. It was easy for her to join a group even when there was no common language (S-1). She continuously observed (sizing up the situation), used nonverbal strategies to find the 'missing' word (mime) or guessed (C-1) what was going on. She was not easily discouraged (C-4) and actively looked for solutions (C-5) asking the educator for help when needed (Scaffolding). Amanda acquired French and English equally well (Phonetic coding ability and Rote learning ability for foreign language material) although these languages represent different groups (Language roots).

Amanda's sense-making strategies were mostly directed by the social strategy (S-1) and cognitive strategies (C-1, C-4, C-5). Her motivation, nonverbal communication skills and her apparent desire to speak both L2 and L3 were reflected in her achievements in those languages. One of the most noticeable strategies Amanda practiced was observation. I interpreted

this as a combination of 'sizing up' her peers and/or situations and taking time to reflect, then take action. Her observations were constant and continued after joining a group (S-1). Observations appeared to be a recurrent practice used by all children in the project.

The following story took place in 'Au Petit Coin', in which the reader will meet the next participant.

Nico

Nico is a thoughtful and inquisitive five-year-old boy. He has been in the home day care center for about one year. At home, he uses a mixture of English and Bulgarian. He speaks English with a heavy accent which resembles his mother's: similar intonation, similar sentence structure. He often asked questions and typically, he listened quietly to the answers while looking at the speaker. His usual reaction was "oh", an apparent acknowledgment to the answer just received. It appeared that he then needed time to think about the answer, sometimes repeating the answer quietly to himself. Often the silence was followed by another question. To illustrate this pattern, let's examine the following dialogue which was recorded at the beginning of the project.

During circle time, the phenomenon of the solar eclipse was explained by the educator. First she explained the solar system followed by a demonstration of what would happen during the eclipse. Nico and the other children were listening with interest, but then Nico wanted clarification.

N: Mary, what is solar?

M: 'Solar' is the same as 'sun', it is just a different word.

N: Oh.. (Nico is looking attentively at the educator, then searches the room with his eyes) followed by a long pause.

N: Mary, how many different words have different words?

M: Well, you also have a word for sun in Bulgarian, don't you?

N: ya... (a long pause, then continues the questioning).

But uhm....Mary, are there three words for 'sun'?

M: No, there are many words for 'sun', as many as there are languages. And may be, there is more than one word for 'sun' in one language. When a word is very important there are more words, more expressions for that word.

N: oh....uhum

Nico needed some time to think about these explanations.

After a few minutes he made the following statement.

"Mary, I only know one word for sun in Bulgarian". (A long pause) oh.....aha". "I know two suns in English,. (meaning sun, and solar). Mary, suns are important in English."

Vygotsky (1985) stated that collaboration between adult and child are key factors in language acquisition. The adult coaches the child along. The scaffolding process, exemplified by questions and answers between adult and child is one medium in which the progress of the child's reasoning

and knowledge can be monitored. Vygotsky also noted the importance of 'inner dialogue' (i.e., the child talks to him/herself and by doing so, reaches a conclusion).in which, according to this theory, the social aspects are maintained. A few weeks after the 'solar lesson', another dialogue took place between Nico and the adult. It was coloring time and Nico chose a picture of a house with a missing chimney.

M: Nico, I want you to color between the lines, any color you want and after that you tell me what is missing in the picture.

Mary did not wait for one of his questions, nor did she ask him if he understood the instructions. At this point, Nico did not seem to be clear what was expected of him. He stared at the picture, tapped on it, stared at Mary, played with the crayon and after a few minutes, took a deep breath and addressed Mary.

N: uhm eh....uhm, Mary?

M: yes, Nico

N: Is this what you want? (he put a crayon on a blank spot and pretended to color).

M: Yes, Nico, very good, color between these lines (leaving out the second instruction, i.e., discovering what part was missing on the house). Nico proceeded to do the task, looking satisfied. He continued to talk to himself. "This here, and then..uh uh, this here, hmm...o.k.". After a while the task was finished and Nico showed his picture to Mary.

M: Well, this is beautiful

N: uhhum...(staring at the picture. He realized that there was another "something" to be done). Mary comes to the rescue and asked: (pointed to the house)

M: Do you know what this is?

N: A house

M: You're right! Is something missing?

N: uhm.....yes..uhm...I do not know

M: (pointing to the roof). Here may be?

N: yes, I know (he drew a chimney).

M: You're right again! What did you just draw?

N: (a long silence, shaking his shoulders)

M: Are you thinking of a word?

N: (staring at Mary). oh.....uh.I only know it in Bulgarian.

M: That's great. Let's hear it.

N: (hardly audible to the adult, he repeated a word in Bulgarian, then a pause, then seemed to find the word in English). I know it! It is a chimney.

M: Bravo, now you have two words for this, very good! Nico looked very content and proceeded to color the chimney. When he was finished he held up the picture and called Mary.

N: Mary, Mary, look, I finished the picture. I draw the chimney, look.

M: You're terrific, Nico, o.k. let's go outside now.

Similar to the situation in the previous story in which Amanda, in her search for words found support from the adult,

Nico used a similar approach. Both children did not appear to reach out to their peers for similar inquiries. It appeared that support in the social environment, in both cases from capable adults, was an important issue in the development of L2.

Nico used a variety of different strategies to get around L2 obstacles. He appeared to be good at taking control of the situation even if he did not understand what was being said or when being asked a question he could not answer (Topic avoidance). He seemed to be able to handle the situation by replying "Oh, I do not know". His next step was to start a conversation using the L2 he was comfortable with (S-2) and (C-2). This became apparent during a meal time conversation between Nico and two of his peers. While sitting around the dinner table, the children were asking each other questions about their lunches.

S: What are you eating to-day, Nico? How come, you're eating that to-day, hé Nico?

N: (looking at his lunch, a long pause) uhm..uhm..Oh, I do not know. I am big, I am bigger than you.

S: (Sean was puzzled for a moment, not expecting this answer, but then clued in). How come you're bigger than me?

N: Well, uhm..uhm, well, cause I was borne bigger than you. I , well, my daddy teached me to ride a bike, he holded me, and eh he holded the bike, and eh he pushed the bike and I did not fell.

S: Did he hold on to the handles?

N: (a long pause, Nico stares at Sean, it is clear that he does not understand the question, turns his head, then looks at his hands)

Hé, you guys, I had a sandwich to-day.

S: Did you have a salad?

N: No....uhm.....I have different things, uhm...

I do not have those things (pointing to the lunches of the other children). I like sandwich.

P: What did you have for lunch, Nico?

N: I like sandwich.

Nico appeared to use the "I do not know" expression as an escape route. At times, he either did not seem to understand the questions, or he did not appear to master the vocabulary to express himself. Tarone (1981) describes this phenomena as "topic avoidance", that is, the L2 speaker does not talk about the concepts for which the vocabulary or meaning of structure is not known. Nico also showed several innovative strategies described by Wong Fillmore (1976) as part of the individual learning styles. These consisted of combinations of social and cognitive strategies (refer to Appendix C for a detailed description).

The moment Nico appeared to be confused about the situation due to his lack of L2, he seemed to take action by either avoiding the topic, as already mentioned, or by changing the topic altogether. His strategy then seemed to be to control the conversation with a few sentences using

words he knew well, giving the impression that he understood what was going on. A technique described by Wong Fillmore (1976) as a combination of two strategies (social strategy S-2, and cognitive strategy C-2). The child will give the impression, with a few well chosen words that he/she can speak the language (S-2) and will then proceed to use some of the expressions he/she understands and simply starts to talk (C-2). However, what had to be taken into account, was the overall atmosphere in which these actions occurred. For example, when speakers switch topics several times during a conversation or ignore questions, they send out signals. These could include a variety of issues such as an unwillingness to discuss the subject, lacking the necessary L2 language skills, avoidance, risk taking or a need to control. These signals are then received by the audience whose reactions will influence the next move. In the conversation cited earlier, two children followed the lead orchestrated by Nico: changing the direction of the conversation by introducing a different topic, not once but twice. Although the children seemed somewhat puzzled at first, they seemed to be able to understand the situation. They continued to talk about the topics Nico had introduced and continued to follow his direction. Would Nico's strategies have worked with a listener more determined to maintain the topic under discussion? An occasion to test this notion presented itself a few weeks later when I asked

Nico what kind of activities he had done during the weekend.
He reported:

"Well, I goed to the store and uh and my daddy buyed
me some uh a bicycle, a new bicycle, a bigger one."

When I asked him if he had lunch with his father in the
shopping mall, he knodded yes. "And what did you have for
lunch," I asked.

N: Well, I had uh, I do not know

R: Did you have a salad?

N: uhm ..yes

R: What kind of salad was it?

N: Well, uh green, and then we went on the bike.

When I asked more questions about the green salad, he ran
away to do an activity. This was interesting because the two
situations were very similar. By unsuccessfully employing
Tarone's 'topic avoidance' strategy, e.g., changing the
topic, he remained in control of the situation by running
away, seemingly creating his own way to avoid an unwanted
situation. Nico had not mastered the past tense and often
used 'go ed', 'hold ed' 'make d'. Most of the time, he was
very precise in his choice of words. Whereas an L1 English
child will say "oh, don't know, or simply "don't know, Nico
will say "Mary, I do not know", every word pronounced very
precisely. He sometimes reversed his word order: "I goed
ride daddy yesterday my bike. On one occasion I observed him
while he was explaining a traffic game to his friends. He

told them which rules to follow when they were on the bike in the backyard: "You stop red, here. I tell you o.k.".

Cummins (1981) argued that parents with limited L2 skills might also limit their children's L2 acquisition. Nico's L2 skills appear to be influenced by his L2 input at home. One of the components in Carroll's (1981) theory of "information and processing" includes 'grammatical sensitivity which might point to Nico's difficulty with the past tense and word order. It appeared that his desire to control could also influence the progress in his L2 acquisition. In contrast to Amanda who looked for maximum exposure to both English and French and kept up lively conversations, using gestures to overcome a language barrier, it seemed that Nico avoided exposure of possible weaknesses in his L2 comprehension by controlling the conversation. When that strategy appeared to fail, he sometimes ran away perhaps for similar reasons.

Nico's strategies.

Nico appeared to be a different strategist in dealing with his L2 environment. It seemed that his strategies were predominantly a (S-2) (C-2) combination. However, this strategy appeared to lead to his recurrent topic avoidance. Nico observed constantly, similar to Amanda. His questions were mainly directed at adults and appeared to reflect inner dialogue (Vygotsky, 1962). They appeared to be progressive

(example: 1. what is solar?, 2. How many suns? 3. There are two suns).

The next story makers are two little brothers, Andy and Eric, who both attend 'Le Papillon Jaune'

Andy.

Andy and his older brother Eric were enrolled in the day care center only a few weeks before I met them. The family immigrated from Romania and maintain their L1 at home. When Andy entered 'Le Papillon Jaune' he had little knowledge of English.

Andy appeared to be an excellent observer. When I first met him, during the first few weeks of the observations, he appeared to remain somewhat on the side and seemed reluctant to join the other children. The following story paints a picture of how it was in the beginning.

It was circle time. The staff member asked the children to put the toys away and sit on the carpet forming a circle. Andy was playing in the corner with the doll house. He looked up when the announcement was made, then looked at the other children. Eventually, when everybody was sitting down, he joined the group, sitting close to the educator. She was talking in English and explaining the song to the children: "we will sing the "touchy song" remember? Listen carefully. When I sing, la la my nose, we are all touching our nose, o.k.?" Andy looked at the educator, listened attentively but did not join in. He moved away and sat down opposite the

educator. It seemed that he had a better view from there. He seemed to try very hard to follow the movements but remained just a bit behind. It appeared that he needed to observe first before he was able to imitate or perhaps needed more time to try to figure out what was going on. It was only when the educator clapped her hands that he joined in immediately which brought about a smile. When the educator switched to French songs, Andy appeared to have a similar reaction. He listened attentively and watched when she was acting out the song, for example, she would imitate playing a guitar and would dance around and clapping her hands. ('Clapping hands' seemed to be an activity he connected with). After a few more songs, Andy got up and wondered off. The educator followed him and asked what he wanted. He stared at her and pointed to the door, then to his shoes. The educator appeared to be puzzled. Andy stared at her, sighed and sat down looking sad. She then tried to encourage him to say something for example "tell me, what is it" (whispering) but without success.

A few weeks later it appeared that Andy was starting to feel more comfortable. He still seemed to be reluctant to join the group and remained somewhat on the outside but his comprehension of English seemed to have improved. He was now following simple instructions and continued to be an excellent observer. He appeared to excel in sizing up situations. He seemed reluctant to ask for help before he tried to figure out his next move or strategies.

On one occasion, just before a planned cookie making activity, the children were asked to sit around the table and wait for the ingredients. Andy was still playing with his favorite toy in a far corner. The educator called out to him and asked him to join the others but Andy did not move. She tried several ways, using different words paired with gestures. Finally, the educator went over to his corner and sat down with him. She explained carefully what was expected, using ample gestures and pointing to the table. After a few minutes Andy's face seemed to light up and a broad smile appeared. He got up, took the educator by the hand and followed her to the table. His educator told me that he enjoys the attention. Perhaps it was the unfamiliarity of the environment and the fact that his brother was in a different group that made him hesitant to join in. It was also probable that his comprehension of L2 was still limited. The fact that he joined in with a little extra help from the educator seemed to indicate that a combination of factors were involved, i.e., limited comprehension and an overwhelming new environment. Finally, the assistance of a trusted adult in his social environment (scaffolding, Vygotsky, 1978) helped him to understand the situation.

Over the next couple of months it became apparent that Andy gradually adjusted to his environment and started to join the activities. He slowly began to express himself and although he started to participate in the group, he did not

actively seek out a conversation with the other children. He continued to use gestures and, although somewhat reluctant began to answer questions when asked by an adult. His response to questions asked by his peers, remained limited to one word utterances such as 'no', 'mine', 'go'.

A trusted adult appeared to have more success in starting a dialogue. On one particular day Andy came into the classroom wearing a new outfit. I seized the opportunity to engage him in a conversation.

R: hm, Andy, where did you get that nice shirt?

A: (looking very proud) uhu..mmm. There (pointing to the outside).

R: In the shopping mall?

A: uhu

R: wow, I see an animal on your shirt, what is it?

A: uhu..tutles, mmm green, look (pointing to the green turtles on his shirt).

R: you have green turtles on your shirt, they look great!

A: yes (accompanied by a big sigh and also looking proud)

R: do you have new shoes, too? (pointing to his shoes)

A: uhu elfants (looking at the blue elephants on his shoes)

R: blue elephants and green turtles, very nice Andy!
(a long stare followed)

A: daddy

R: did you buy all this with daddy?

A: no, (sigh) daddy (looking at me, hopeful)

R: daddy?? (puzzled)

A: yes, want daddy

R: daddy will be here soon to pick you up.

A: yes..(a very long stare, then looked out of the window and pointed to a white truck) tuck!

R: yes, a big white truck, lets go and see

Changing the topic in this case, appeared to be different from Tarone's (1980) 'topic avoidance' strategy. Andy asked a question (Daddy?) and appeared to be satisfied with the answer. He then moved on to the next topic (white truck).

Since Andy's arrival at the day care center he has made great progress, although he seemed to proceed with caution. His sense making strategies appeared to be guided by his patience and observation skills. When he was not sure what was going on, his first strategy appeared to be to 'size up' the situation. He observed from a distance, paying attention to the overall situation, following other children's' actions and seemed to try to figure out what was going on. Weber & Tardif (1990) refer to this strategy as "attending to the meaning-structure of the situation (p. 9). Although he eventually joined the group, he appeared to avoid conversations. For example, when other children asked him a simple such as "what is this?" or "what do you have there?", he did not answer. Similar avoidances appeared to occur in

group activities. For example, when the educator explained an activity to the group, she always asked if there were any questions. Most of the children would respond. Some raised their hands, others would shout "me, me" or "can I" or "I want". I did not observe any response from Andy. Only on a one-to-one with the educator would he whisper something in her ear.

Wong Fillmore (1979) noted that some L2 learners appear to join the L1 group and act as if they understand what's going on, even if they don't (S-1 strategy). Andy's approach appeared to be the opposite in that he first seemed to need to figure out what was going on, planned a strategy, then joined, cautiously.

Some evidence of this assumption was observed during a group activity in which the children were engaged in a guessing game. A box with figurines was put in the middle of the table and the children were asked to pull one out and then tell the group what it was. The next step was for another child to volunteer to tell a little story. Andy first observed this activity from a distance only to join the group after a few stories were told. He sat down and proceeded to pull an animal out of the box. Being the 'owner' of the animal, he only had to know or guess the name of the animal. He seems to observe before getting involved and then appears to come prepared with a plan of action.

I can only infer that he seemed to internalize his observations before deciding what to do. He did not appear

to be a risk taker and seemed to proceed with caution. (A strategy that seems to work well for him). During the almost 6 months he has spent in the day care his L2 has improved greatly. Our last conversation developed into a dialogue which included 5 word utterances. We were sitting in his favorite corner, looking at a picture book.

R: look, what have we here? (looking at a drawing with trees and different kinds of birds flying around)

A: birds, trees (pointing to the pictures)

R: I see birds and trees, What else do you see?

A: birds fly and uh birds fly uh there in tree

R: yes, right, the birds fly over there, in the tree

Wong Fillmore's (1983) social-style characteristics of L2 acquirers include interactional skills for example outgoingness and desire for contact with others, talkativeness and activity preferences (p. 161). It appeared that Andy preferred largely solitary and nonverbal activities. He liked playing with the doll house and the tool bench. On one occasion I observed him for about twenty minutes playing happily with the doll house. He moved the various objects for example the furniture, dolls and other objects around with great precision, quietly humming, then looking at the changes he had made. Sometimes he would 'make a face' or frown and say "mmmmuhu" and looking very pleased.

On one of the outings in the park I also observed his preference for solitary play. He often played on a climbing

'wall' and then sat on the top and watched the other children play. He would respond to a simple questions, however. For example:

R: Are you coming down now, Andy?

A: uhu (pointing to the ladder)

R: what's next, Andy?

A: more, up again.

R: you're a good climber!

A: (looking very pleased) uhu

Although Andy was very quiet, he appeared to take in what was going on around him. Only when his brother paid him a visit, or when they were together at the end of the day while waiting for their parents' arrival, Andy got very excited, staying close to his brother, talking (always in English). When the parents arrived they both 'raced' towards them. The language automatically switched to Romanian.

When I asked the parents what language was prominent at home I was informed that "we speak Romanian with them. We want them to know our language, so they understand our culture. We want them to know English and French, because we live here". When I asked what language Andy and Eric used between them, they replied "English". A well documented reality (Rodríguez, 1982; Miller, 1983).

Andy's strategies.

Andy's strategies did not seem to match Wong Fillmore's social and cognitive strategies. He appeared to prefer adult company and solitary play. He used nonverbal strategies

(mime) and, similar to Amanda and Nico appeared to be an active observer.

Andy's five-year-old brother Eric is in the next classroom. His story is next.

ERIC.

Andy's older brother, Eric, is in another classroom. Sometimes they visit each other during the day but the staff does not encourage it.

Eric's approach to his L2 environment was somewhat different from that of his brother's. During the first couple of weeks Eric, like Andy, stayed in the background for a while, sizing up the situation. He responded to simple instructions from the staff members for example: "sit here, please; come here, please. He did not use any verbal language and communicated with gestures, nodding his head or other types of body language including turning away, putting his head in his hands and closing his eyes. Some of these were observed throughout the day, for example when he was asked to participate in a game, or to help with a chore

On one occasion during a game it appeared that Eric felt left out of the group and showed his feelings in the following manner. The educator asked the children to sit on the carpet and started to prepare for the "Dinosaur game".

In the Dinosaur game, every child receives his/her own dinosaur with their name written on it. The next step is to

find your own name on a big Dinosaur picture and attach your own dinosaur.

Eric was sitting in a corner, looking unhappy. The educator asked: "Eric, what is wrong?". No answer. "Eric, are you o.k.?" Eric put his hands under his chin and looked at the teacher but did not answer. "Eric, what is it?" the educator insisted. He finally pointed to the box with the dinosaurs. "Well?", the educator tried again. Eric pointed to the box, then to the large picture. "Oh, you did not get your dinosaur, is that it?" the educator asked. Eric took a deep breath and nodded in agreement.

Wong Fillmore (1983) found that the children in her study, Cantonese and Spanish speaking children learning English, paid close attention when their teachers talked to them. She noticed that during most of the activities, these children appeared to be good observers rather than participants (p. 165).

The children involved in the present study showed similar behavior, particularly in the early stages of their L2 acquisition. Eric became more assertive over time as his L2 vocabulary increased. However, he seldom asked questions, rather he expressed opinions in long and articulate sentences. When he did not want to do an activity, he would remain in the group, clearly stating: "I do not want to do that". When the educator asked the reason, he repeated the same answer. Rarely did he answer questions, rather, he made statements. For example: "I do not like to eat that", and

"No, I do not go now". During lunch time, the educator tried to get him to ask for his fruit. While she went around with the fruit bowl, she asked each child the same question, calling out his/her name. For example: "Sean, do you want an apple". When she came to Eric's place and asked him the same question, he put out his hand. Even when the educator repeated the question, explaining she wanted to hear his voice, he refused to talk, turning his head away.

Similar to his brother Andy, Eric is an observer. On one occasion, the educator organized a 'guessing game'. For example, one question stated 'where is the first place where you come in, and what do you do?' She gave several clues to help the children find the answers. For example: "when you come to your house, you see the.....". One child answered "door". "Very good", the teacher replied. Then she would give the next clue. During the game, Eric remained in the background, when addressed by the teacher, he turned his head away. Only when she asked him to go to the door, he ran to it and smiled. After the game, the educator went over to him and took him to the door. She asked: "Can you tell me what doors do, Eric?". Eric responded with a smile and said: "The door opens and I go out". She replied: "Do you want to go out?" Eric then responded with a long pensive look and said: "I go out now and see Andy".

It appeared that the support from the adult in this relatively new environment was helping both Andy and Eric in gaining confidence. The scaffolding process (Vygotsky, 1978)

employed by the adult and their own attention to the meaning-structures of the situations (Weber & Tardif, 1990) appeared to have helped in the understanding of their L2 environment. This became apparent several weeks before the end of this study. I was sitting at a small table, writing notes. On the table were numerous (paper) animals which needed to be folded for a game. Eric approached the table (looking at me) and announced: "I sit here".

R: Good idea, would you like fold the animals?

E: uhhum (kept on looking at me)

R: do you know what to do?

E: (shaking his head) nnhhh

R: I'll show you (folding the animal), see, like this.

E: I fold the animal like this, hhh?

R: yes, very good

Eric proceeded to fold all the animals, then after awhile, he looked at me, and said:

E: I folded the animals and after I glued (looking at me)

R: When you are finished, then you put some glue here (showing him where the glue had to go) and then you put them there (pointing to a piece of carton).

E: (looking at his work, it seemed that he was thinking about all the information, then repeated) I folded, then I glued, then put it there. While he worked, he continued to talk to himself: "I folded this now", looking at the animal,

"I glued this, now I put it there". After he was finished, he showed me his work.

E: Look, I finished now. I go and play Batman now. (ran off to the box with the dress-up clothes).

When Eric concentrated on a task he verbalized his actions, almost a copy of the earlier conversation with the adult who had given him the instructions on the task. Although there were few if any verbal questions from Eric to report during my observations, it appeared that some active questioning must be going on. Perhaps his statements are some form of questioning. For example. "I sit here" while he was looking at me, presumably for approval. His verbalizations during his activity seemed to reflect a form of self-questioning: "I folded this" then he looked at the animal (Am I doing the right thing here?) I glued this, now I put it there. (I wonder if I can go and play my favorite game when I am finished?).

Eric's social-style characteristics appeared to include cautiousness and observations. Wong Fillmore (1983) argued that there are many effective ways of learning a second language. She extended the argument that "there is no single way to characterize either the good or the poor language learner" (p. 161). Eric also seemed to think about his next moves and I wondered what he was contemplating. On one such occasion when he was observing several other children who were playing with building blocks, I quietly asked him:

"Would you tell me what you are thinking?" The only reply I got was a stare and a smile. He then ran away.

Eric's strategies.

Eric's way of making sense out of his surroundings appeared to be directed by observations and "sizing up" of situations. Similar to his brother Andy, observations and cautiousness were predominant. His nonverbal strategies (mime) were gradually replaced by his newly acquired L2 (English). His verbal repetitions (to himself) appeared to be a sign of "inner dialogue" (Vygotsky, 1962).

KIM AND TOH.

Kim and Toh are two children who differed considerably from the learners we have examined so far. They appeared to depend on visual clues, good observation skills and sizing up situations and people. The two siblings and their family recently arrived in Canada from Vietnam. Their first language, Vietnamese, is maintained at home. When I asked the staff how they communicated with the family, I learned that Vietnamese was the only language the family spoke besides a very rudimentary knowledge of French. This limited the communication process. Little is known by the day care educators about the children's skills, likes or dislikes. These two children were assigned to the same classroom, mainly because the educator found that Toh needed the support of his older sister.

Kim appeared to be a lively, energetic girl with an inviting smile. Toh is very quiet and followed his sister where ever she went. They have only been at the 'Le Papillon Jaune' for less than two months and only come to the center on a part time basis, usually two days per week. The educators assume that the two children have no knowledge of English and French. To explain an activity or announce a plan presents an obvious challenge. (No one in the center speaks Vietnamese). The educator felt that the most effective way to communicate with the children is with gestures, pointing, showing and trying to encourage them to watch other children. Generally, this worked well mainly also due to the cooperation of Kim. Sometimes it is trial and error! Mostly, it was persistence.

During an Arts and Craft session, the children were told to choose a drawing representing an instrument. This was a follow-up session from a previous music lesson whereby the real instruments had been used. The children scrambled to find "their own instruments" in order to color them in their favorite color. Kim appeared to be confused. The educator tried to find ways to explain to Kim to choose a drawing. She showed her the picture of a piano, held this up and asked: "Tu veux?" Kim smiled and nodded her head. The educator, not sure if this was the right response, tried with another picture. Kim showed the same reaction. Finally, the educator gave her the piano picture and another one to Toh.

The next challenge was to explain how to color. The educator put her hand gently at Kim's shoulder and pointed to the other children. The idea was to share the paint between two children and color the picture between the lines. Kim appeared to understand. She sat quietly, watched the other children at work, then said something to her brother. After a while, Kim proceeded to give her brother a paintbrush and pointed to the picture. They exchanged some words. Toh nodded and started his activity, Kim looked around the room, then at the educator and started to color her drawing.

Whenever the educator or one of the other children asked Kim a question, the response was always the same. Kim paid full attention to the speaker, always smiled, always nodding her head. In the beginning the educator assumed that Kim understood. The response always seemed appropriate. However, the questions were mainly geared for 'yes' or 'no' answers. Thus, a nod and a smile was a save way to respond. This 'guessing' became noticeable during a game played among three children including Kim. The French girl told Kim: "Prend-le". The (predictable) smile and nod was Kim's reply but no further reaction. The French girl tried again, impatient: "Prend-le", she repeated. Finally, she told the others, shaking her shoulders: "Elle ne comprend pas" and put the toy in Kim's hand. Kim answered in Vietnamese, always equipped with a smile. The other children nodded "yes" in response.

In contrast with her brother, Kim constantly participated and always joined a group. First, she observed for a while and tried to imitate the others. Most of the time, this strategy worked, sometimes it did not. This did not seem to bother her. Toh dealt with his L2 environment in a different way. He remained distant unless Kim initiated his involvement. Sometimes, he ran around the room, on his own, then stopped waiting for Kim in a corner. Neither Kim, nor Toh used gestures to make themselves understood.

It has been argued that gestures are cultural-specific (Poyatos, 1983). The meaning of gestures, therefore, could be misinterpreted by outsiders of a specific group (Birdwhistell, 1970). Kim and Toh appeared to either ignore the gestures used by the educator or their peers, or misunderstood the meaning. It seemed significant that they did not try to make themselves understood with the help of gestures. Perhaps they were unaware that the gestures were part of a communication system.

It appeared that Kim's friendly disposition and glowing smile made it easier for her to be accepted in her peer group. Her apparent lack of L2 did not stop her from participating in activities. She did not seem to be bothered when her peers appeared to become impatient. Her persistence and willingness to get involved seem to flash a message to her audience: 'I am trying'. Wong Fillmore (1983) argued that interactional characteristics, for example the desire for contact with others, and the help of friends

(S-3) are important assets for the L2 acquirer. Kim appeared to seek contact with her peers and paid attention to explanations from the educator. I can only infer that cultural differences might play a role in trying to make sense in her L2 environment. Perhaps gestures such as pointing or hand signals are unfamiliar communication tools in her L1 culture. Her own strategies, a smile and observations which appeared to include "sizing up" her environment appeared to work for her. In the short time I had the privilege to be around Kim and her brother, I felt that they managed well. Kim seemed to have the determination to unravel the mysteries of her new L2 environment. She reminded me of Amanda, who had a similar determination to get involved. Kim joined the group during play without understanding what was going on (S-1). She appeared to count on her friends for support (S-3), she constantly paid attention to her surroundings, observing the educator, watching her peers. I did not see her using nonverbal strategies e.g., pointing or clapping. Neither did her brother. Toh paid attention mostly to his sister. Occasionally the two spoke to each other, always discretely. It was difficult to categorize cognitive strategies mainly due to the absence of apparent nonverbal strategies and L2 output. Her most obvious strategy was observation. Toh mainly imitated his sister. His observation was mostly focused on Kim.

Kim's strategy.

Kim's (observable) strategies were mainly (S-1) and (S-3) while her most prominent strategy was 'observation'. Although Kim and Toh had only been in the day care for a short while, the interesting difference between these two children and the others was the absence of nonverbal strategies as defined by Tarone (1981). It appeared that the cultural differences were reflected in the absence of these strategies (Poyatos, 1983).

CHAPTER 4

BEYOND THE WORDS

Over a period of four months, the researcher followed six young minority language immigrant children closely, watching how they tried to make sense of their L2 environment. The day care centers in which the observations took place proved to be a suitable environment to learn more about the ways these children conduct their sense-making strategies and how they come to understand their L2 environment. The flexibility in schedules and activities prevalent in the day care environment allowed the children the freedom to explore their skills, and test their L2 strategies through play and peer group activities.

What made sense in their sense-making strategies? Although the findings of this study seem to indicate that sense-making strategies cannot be clearly defined; different patterns or styles of sense-making did emerge for each child. Like second language acquisition, sense-making strategies involve a multitude of issues.

Motivation (e.g., Genesee, Rogers & Holobow, 1983), attitudes (e.g., Lambert 1967; Cummins, 1978; Miller, 1983) and cognitive ability (e.g., Lightbown, 1977) have been well documented as factors important to L2 acquisition. In this project, additional components were identified as important to the children's sense-making: scaffolding (Vygotsky,

1978), inner dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978) and interactional social skills (Wong Fillmore, 1983).

Individual approaches to understanding their L2 environment was marked by the children's personality traits such as extrovert (e.g., bubbly, talkative, easily approachable) or introvert (e.g., quiet, appeared to be timid), risk taking (e.g., if you don't know, ask for help; joining a group you don't know; trying until you succeed), or cautiousness (e.g., wait and see, educator needed to coach the child before he/she joined a group or participated in a new venture). However, two components in the children's sense-making strategies were repeatedly and commonly observed in all participants. They were:

1. observing to make sense and
2. taking time to reflect.

Both strategies are not explicitly defined in the categories already described by other researchers. However, their functions proved to be important for the children in this study. Findings showed that the children in the study used a variety or a combination of sense-making strategies. These emerging variations in sense-making strategies observed in the participating young minority language immigrant children have a powerful implication. They suggest that there is a need to establish a category for 'individual sense-making styles' to document individual variations in minority language immigrant children in an L2 environment.

Detailed descriptions of the children's strategies were reported earlier. What follows is a summary of the sense-making strategies used by the six children who participated in the study. A final word about the individual patterns of strategies used by Amanda, Nico, Andy, Eric, Kim and Toh will conclude their stories but will leave us with questions for further investigation.

The following is a summary of all the sense-making strategies that were employed by the children in the study. The strategies were mostly used in a combination of two or three different strategies. The uniqueness of each child is reflected in the summary of individual sense-making styles.

1. Observing to make sense (sizing up the situation and people)
2. Taking time to reflect (taking time before answering a question, taking time before a next move)
3. Mime (facial expressions, pointing, mimicking, shaking head, clapping hands)
4. Topic avoidance (changing the current topic, avoiding answering a question, running away from the situation)
5. S-1. (The social strategy of "size up the situation and quickly follow suit"; "join the group and take charge")

6. S-2. (The social strategy "pretend to know by starting a conversation or talk about something you know well")
7. S-3. (The social strategy "sit next to a friend who you know will help you")
8. C-1. (The cognitive strategy "guess and stay neutral by saying something that will fit and blend in")
9. C-2. (The cognitive strategy "lead the conversation with something simple for example: Look here")
10. C-4. (The cognitive strategy "just try till you succeed")
11. C-5. (The cognitive strategy "use the words you know and find help for the ones you miss")
12. Scaffolding (getting help from an adult for example knowing the word in L1 and asking for the L2 translation or acting out the word and asking the adult what it is)
13. Inner dialogue (repeating what you're doing and then come to a conclusion for example: I do this, and umm then umm I do that, and then I aha that's it!).

AMANDA.

Amanda was an energetic four-year-old girl with a quest for knowledge. She was inquisitive, outgoing, eager to participate and seemingly derived pleasure from being around people. She seemed to be comfortable with risk taking, seeking help from adults when needed, connecting with peers even though in some instances she had never seen them before.

(Recall the earlier described scene in the park with the Greek children). Amanda seemed to be a success story. Her easy going manners and bubbly personality seemed tailor made for a successful social integration. According to Vygotsky (1978), success in social integrational contexts has powerful implications for success in academic contexts, including the strictly cognitive. Her language abilities were remarkable. Even though she arrived at the day care six months earlier as a unilingual Spanish speaker, she quickly acquired both English and French in addition to her first language.

Amanda's sense-making strategies seemed to be directed by her motivation to gain knowledge (e.g., Genesee, Rogers & Holobow, 1983), her interactional social skills (Wong Fillmore, 1983) and cognitive ability (e.g., Lightbown, 1977). Prominent also were her requests for assistance from an adult when searching for words in L2. Scaffolding gave her immediate access to new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Other outstanding strategies were 'mimicking words' when she did not know or could not recall the equivalent from her L1 Spanish in English or French. According to Wong Fillmore's framework Amanda excelled in the cognitive strategies (e.g., just guess and hope the conversation is related to the situation; make the most of what you've got; work on the big things first, save the details for later). These were supported by her social strategies (e.g., join in and act as if you know what's going on). What made her style unique was her active search for knowledge. This was reflected in her

requests for help from the adult when she could not find the answer on her own, her willingness to explore in order to find answers, and joining peer groups and conversations.

NICO.

Nico was a thoughtful and inquisitive five-year old boy. He used different strategies in his search for meaning. He appeared to be more cautious and reflective. 'Keeping up appearances' often leads to topic avoidance (Tarone, 1980). In conversations with his peers as well as with adults, Nico often changed topics. For example: three children were talking about the content of their lunch boxes. Nico switched the conversation to bike rides. It was apparent that he could not find the appropriate words in L2 for that particular subject. He was not a risk-taker and did not like to be put 'on the spot'. Nico handled such situations by taking control of the conversation or switching activities. His requests for help were mainly directed at adults. Like Amanda, Nico asked the educator for a word or an explanation if he did not understand what was going on (scaffolding). When in the company of his peers, he came across as 'bossy', (e.g., taking control of the conversation by changing the subject or organizing a game and then 'giving orders' to the other children).

Questions directed at adults often came after a period of reflection (inner dialogue) and indicated an increase in knowledge. For example after the educator introduced the

children to the new topic of 'solar eclipse', Nico sat quietly for a while before he asked the educator several questions. The questions and his conclusions came in the following order: (1) "What is solar", (2) "I know three words for sun", (3) "Sun is important". He often used this approach i.e., listening first, then taking time to reflect, sometimes posing questions quietly to himself. When it seemed that he had found an answer, he would then verify this with the adult. This approach resembles an inner dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978). His social-style characteristics appeared to be concerned with giving a good impression, which included leading the conversation among peers. The uniqueness of his sense-making style appeared to be his concern with his image e.g., don't let your friends know that you don't understand. His prominent social strategy was 'give the impression that you know the language' combined with the cognitive strategy 'get some expressions you understand, and start talking'; and if that approach does not work you change the topic.

ANDY AND ERIC.

Both Andy and Eric were quiet observers and enjoyed activities that were largely solitary and non-verbal. Andy did not have a large L2 vocabulary and to go around what appeared to be the L2 obstacles, he used mainly mime. He was good in pointing and sometimes mimicked a word or a request (e.g., standing in front of the window pointing to Eric's classroom and looking at the teacher with a hopeful

expression on his face when he wanted to visit his brother). The uniqueness of his sense-making style was his passive way of figuring out what was going on. In the beginning of the study he often tried to imitate the educator's words with his mouth but without the sound. In general, it was the adult who reached out to him.

His older brother Eric also used mainly mime to communicate noticeably in the beginning of the study. However, the mime was gradually replaced by verbal language when these skills improved and he became more confident. He gradually started to repeat small phrases out loud when attempting a task, for example "I do this, then ..aha.... I do that" (Vygotsky, 1978). Both Andy and Eric spent considerable time observing and taking time to reflect. Their sense-making styles were very similar. Quiet and passive and at the same time very aware of the happenings around them.

KIM AND TOH.

Kim and her younger brother Toh were in the same group. Newly arrived in Canada, they spoke only their first language. Both were very quiet, almost timid but without being shy. Kim sometimes spoke to her brother, presumably to explain something to him. Toh mainly observed his sister. He imitated Kim during activities. Perhaps he was playing it safe? Kim appeared to be more outgoing. She cautiously approached her peers, quietly joining in and imitating a

friend. Toh remained at a distance unless Kim urged him to join.

Strategies employed by Kim and Toh were mainly 'observation' and 'imitating'. Kim's social style characteristics (preference for interaction) helped her to get involved in the group and to reach out to her friends for help. Toh mainly imitated his sister. Their uniqueness was evident in their observation strategies and the apparent lack of overt signs to communicate (e.g., pointing or mimicking).

Sense-making strategies have not been described in the literature as a separate and identifiable category (Weber & Tardif, 1990). What the children in this research project demonstrated was that various means are employed by individual L2 acquirers to understand their L2 environment. In most cases, these strategies are grounded in well documented theories: information processing (Carroll, 1981); communication strategies (Tarone, 1980); social and cognitive strategies (Wong Fillmore, 1976). What became evident was the variation in individual style of each participant in this project. Cultural differences (Birdwhistell, 1970; Poyatos, 1983; Fishman, 1989) might have played a role in the individual social characteristics of the children.

Observing to make sense.

The interesting and recurring factor in the sense-making strategies employed by all children in the study appeared to be 'observing to make sense' and 'taking time to reflect'.

Every child, in a variety of ways, observed the situation and people: Andy and Eric favored staring at the speaker or speakers, preferably from close range; Kim used her smile to disarm the speaker while she looked attentively into the speaker's eyes, perhaps trying to 'read' a message; Nico appeared to feel more comfortable with a 'blank stare' or sometimes just staring at his book; Amanda overtly observed, seemingly to get a good grasp on the situation.

Taking time to reflect.

A second important factor appeared to be 'taking time to reflect'. This was reflected in the time delay when answering a question. Nico often reacted with "uhhh" or "mmhumm" when he was given an explanation by the educator before he continued. Amanda used "uhhhh" and a pause when looking for a word. Andy appeared to use "yes" and a pause. Seeing Andy reminded me of my own experience when I first emerged in a second language environment. I learned that, in the early stages of L2 acquisition, these extra few seconds were very helpful and necessary to find the appropriate word, or to obtain a better grasp on what was being said.

What was apparent among the children in the study was the individual combination of strategies. These combinations are reflected in the following summary.

SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL SENSE-MAKING STYLES

Amanda	(S-1)	(C-1)	(C-4)	(C-5)	mime	active participant
Nico	(S-2)	(C-2)	topic avoidance			active participant
Kim	(S-1)					
	(S-3)					active participant
Andy					mime	quiet observer
Eric					mime	quiet observer

As already mentioned, "observing to make sense" and "time to reflect" were strategies frequently used and common to all participants. Both strategies are not included in the categories mentioned by other researchers. However, their functions seem to be important for the L2 acquirer.

Another interesting finding was the apparent absence of nonverbal strategies of the two Vietnamese children. It is possible, however, that the cultural differences between the researcher and these two children prevented the detection of these strategies (Birdwhistell, 1970; Poyatos, 1983). What is clear is that their nonverbal strategies, if present, were subtle or at least different from those used by the other children. Important also was the use of the scaffolding techniques frequently used by at least four of the children.

Findings of this study showed that the sense-making strategies employed by the participants in this project were

marked by individual styles. The children varied in the combinations of strategies they used to make sense of their L2 environment. They also differed in the way they used these strategies. In other words, although there are strategies such as "observing to make sense" and "taking time to reflect", common to all children, each individual seems to develop a preferred sense-making style.

As discussed earlier, a day care center was selected for the study as the environment of choice. In contrast with grade schools, day care settings where schedules are more flexible allow the children the freedom to explore, e.g., exploring their strengths and using their imagination to develop strategies to acquire new skills that appear to benefit them the most. As mentioned earlier, success in social interaction and acceptance by peers will lead to success in academic contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). Even partial social success can help children acquire a positive self-concept. This is specifically important for minority language immigrant children during a transitional period from the home to the school language and culture.

This study raises interesting questions that warrant further investigation:

1. What happens when older immigrant minority language children enter (L2) grade school?
2. Do cultural differences between staff and student significantly influence sense-making strategies?

3. What happens to the students' individual sense-making styles?
4. How does this influence the students' achievement?

The findings indicate that there are several individual sense-making styles employed by young minority language immigrant children, and emphasize the need for more qualitative longitudinal studies in day care and school settings.

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APPENDIX A**Letters of Explanation and Consent form**

February, 17, 1994.

Ms. L. Valin, Coordinator
Family Day Care Agency
828 Decarie Blvd., suite 201
St. Laurent, Qué
H4L 3L9

Dear Ms. Valin,

Further to our telephone conversations I would like to introduce myself more formally. I am a graduate student at Concordia University in the Department of Education. Having completed all formal courses, I am now working on my thesis in order to complete the requirements for obtaining the Masters Degree in Child Study. I am under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Weber with whom I meet regularly to discuss details of my intended research.

As a first generation immigrant, I am vastly interested in immigrant children and their position in their newly found environment. My research will focus on how their environment influences the acquisition of their second language. More specifically, how the home environment and educational environment influence their progress.

At this stage of my research I have done an extensive literature review and will continue to do so. So far, numerous findings in the research literature have highlighted the importance of maintaining the mother tongue and home culture. This is thought to give young immigrant children the security and stability they need in order to explore their new surroundings, enhancing their ability to acquire

their second language while maintaining their cultural identity.

My research is based on a qualitative approach including interviews with teachers and caretakers. Primarily, I intend to observe the children in day-care facilities as well as at their homes.

My experience as a special education teacher as well as my experience in various countries where immigrant children were initially supported by teachers and caretakers either from their own culture or at least speaking the same language has taught me that this approach is valuable.

I would very much appreciate your assistance in this research project which I hope will contribute to the literature and more importantly, will be of help to immigrant families.

I am looking forward to meeting you and I will be happy to explain the project in more detail should that be required,

Sincerely,

Louise Linschoten.

Director Family Day Care Center,

Dear Madam,

I am a graduate student at Concordia University and presently conducting research in second language acquisition. As a first generation immigrant I am vastly interested in the second language skills in young immigrant children. In my research, I will be looking at possible environmental influences on the acquisition of second language in immigrant children. More specifically, how the home environment and the educational environment affect their progress.

My intention is to observe and to work with immigrant children in various settings for which I am asking you for your support by allowing me into your program. I will be working in close cooperation with the coordinator of the Family Day-Care Agency of the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ms. Louise Valin as well as Ms. Judith Litvack, home supervisor. I will also be supervised by my advisor at Concordia University, Dr. Sandra Weber, Director of the Child Study Graduate Program.

All personal information such as names and addresses will be left out in any reports, thus ensuring strict confidentiality.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at home.

Thanking you in advance for your attention,
Sincerely,

Louise Linschoten.

Dear (parent's name),

I would like to take a moment of your time and introduce myself. My name is Louise Linschoten and I am a graduate student at Concordia University.

As a first generation immigrant I am vastly interested in second language acquisition in immigrant children. For this reason I am asking your permission to work with your child in the day-care facility.

I will be working under the supervision of my advisor, Dr. Sandra Weber, Director of the Child Study Graduate Program at Concordia University.

To ensure confidentiality, no personal information such as names and addresses will be recorded in any form.

I hope that the results of this project will be of help to immigrant families and their children. To allow me to include your child in this project, please sign the attached form.

If you have any questions, you can contact me or leave a message at my home number.

Thanking you for your attention,
Sincerely,

Louise Linschoten.

PERMISSION FORM

I hereby give permission for my son/daughter_____ to participate in the research project conducted by Louise Linschoten from Concordia University. I understand that the study involves naturalistic observations of my child in the DAY-CARE center. In order to study second language acquisition, an audio-tape recorder will be used occasionally. As well, a brief parent interview related to language used in the home may be conducted during the course of the study.

I understand that all information gathered for the purpose of this project will remain confidential. Please return the permission form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Thank you.

Parent Signature

Date

APPENDIX B
Second language (L2) terminology

TERMINOLOGY USED IN SECOND LANGUAGE LITERATURE.

Mother or native tongue:

The language which a person acquires in early years and which normally becomes his or her natural instrument of thought and communication. (Fishman, 1968).

First language (L1):

The language the child learned first (mother or native tongue) and is used at home. (McLaughlin, 1984).

Second language (L2):

The language that is acquired after the first language (therefore in addition to his or her L1, or mother or native tongue). (McLaughlin, 1984).

Second language acquisition (L2 acquisition):

Acquiring a second language in a natural environment without formal instruction. (Krashen, 1983).

APPENDIX C

A typology of communication strategies (Tarone, 1980).

Tarone's typology of communication strategies.

PARAPHRASE.

Approximation: Use of a single target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the speaker (e.g., "pipe" for "waterpipe")

Word coinage: The learner makes up a new word in order to communicate a desired concept (e.g., "airball" for "balloon")

Circumlocution: The learner describes the characteristics or elements of the object or action instead of using the appropriate structure (e.g., I don't know what's its name).

TRANSFER.

Literal translation: The learner translates word for word from the native language (e.g., "He invites him to drink" for "they toast one another").

Language switch: The learner use the native term without bothering to translate (e.g., "balon" for "balloon").

Appeal for assistance: The learner asks for the correct term or structure (e.g., "What is this?")

Mime: The learner uses nonverbal strategies in place of a meaning structure (e.g., clapping hands to illustrate applause).

AVOIDANCE:

Topic avoidance: Occurs when the learner simply does not talk about concepts for which the vocabulary or other meaning structure is not known.

Message abandonment: Occurs when the learner begins to talk about a concept but is unable to continue due to lack of meaning structure, and stops in mid-utterance.

APPENDIX D

Cognitive and social strategies (Wong Fillmore, 1976).

Cognitive and social strategies

SOCIAL STRATEGIES:

- S-1: join a group and act as if you understand what's going on, even if you don't.
S-2: give the impression, with a few well chosen words, that you can speak the language.
S-3: count on your friends for help.

COGNITIVE STRATEGIES:

- C-1: assume that what people are saying is directly relevant to the situation at hand, or to what they or you are experiencing. Metastrategy: GUESS!
C-2: Get some expressions you understand, and start talking.
C-3: Look for recurring parts in the formulas you know.
C-4: Make the most of what you've got.
C-5: Work on the big things first; save the details for later.

social strategies	cognitive strategies
S-1	C-1
S-2	C-2
	C-3
S-3	C-4
	C-5

pairing of the social and cognitive strategies

(Wong Fillmore, 1976, p. 209).

APPENDIX E
Clarification Day Care facility

Clarification Day Care facility

Day Care Facility:

A setting where non parental care is offered to children usually ranging in age between three months and five years.

Operating hours are between approximately 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. The children are under the supervision of child care workers.

To obtain an operating licence, day care facilities must meet clearly defined standards, as outlined by the Provincial Government. (Gouvernement du Québec, 1992).